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PH.D. 1938,  
ORIENTAL LITERATURE.

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## **Eṣuttaccan and His age.**

### **Chapter I.**

#### **A brief survey of Malayālam literature before Eṣuttaccan.**

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**This comprises:-**

(1) A brief examination of current theories about the origin of Malayālam language.

(2) A new theory that Malayālam is as old as the other Dravidian languages with an independant cultural background, but was influenced by Tamil and Sanskrit at different stages of its growth.

(3) A Survey of literary tendencies of different periods and the place of Kaṇṇassan and Cerussēri as forerunners of Eṣuttaccan.

### **Chapter II.**

#### **A biographical Sketch.**

This (1) examines important legends about Eṣuttaccan's parentage and family;

(2) places him in the first half of the 16th century, 2 or 3 generations earlier than his usually accepted date (viz:17th century),

(3) reconstructs the historical background on the basis of the cult of Bhakti or God-ward love which runs through all his works.



### Chapter III.

#### Criticism of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.

This contains (1) a preliminary discussion for the better understanding of Eṣuttaccan's treatment of the epic theme.

(2) Observations on Valmiki's work and the unsoundness of the theory of Aryan invasion of S. India based on that.

(3) reasons for Eṣuttaccan's preference for Adhyātmam

(4) a detailed examination of his work, showing that in characterisation and presentation Eṣuttaccan follows a line independent of the original A.R.

### Chapter IV.

#### Criticism of Mahābhārata

This after (1) a short review of the size of the Sanskrit epic and its various recensions,

(2) shows that Eṣuttaccan's Bhārata is much smaller in size, many Upākhyāṇams particularly the Bhagavadgīta having been omitted, and

(3) studies the work closely considering its dominant note and analysing a few characteristics of its poetry.

### Chapter V.

In this chapter (1) Eṣuttaccan's Minor works four in number are briefly noticed and an estimate of his Contemporaries



made and

(2) Ēṣuttaccan's greatness as an epic poet, philosopher and reformer, a pioneer in the educational field, his dominant position in Malayālam literature and the influence of his saintly personality on his age and succeeding ages are considered.



THESIS submitted for the Ph. D. Degree of the  
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(Faculty of Arts)

✓  
EZUTTACCAN AND HIS AGE.

By

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## PREFACE.

Various aspects of Kṛuttaccan's complex personality have been studied separately by scholars in Malayālam, but a comprehensive survey of his character and works in all their bearings together with their influence on his age, which I have attempted in these pages has not been undertaken before. The saintly poet has almost become a mythical figure in Malabar and the task of deciphering the man out of the morass of legendary lore that surrounds him has not been easy. In this difficult, but interesting study, I may acknowledge that the wide knowledge of Indian culture of Dr.L.D.Barnett under whom I had the privilege to work for the past two years had been of invaluable assistance and his advice and guidance have been really an inspiration to me. I am deeply indebted to him for the help I have received from him.

I wish also to express my heartfelt thanks to Mr.C.S.K.Pathy and Mr.T.N.Menon for their useful suggestions.

C.A.MENON.



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N.B. In the abstract already forwarded only five chapters have been mentioned. It has since been found desirable to split the last chapter into two.

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### Introduction.

The work on Eṣuttaccan and His age that is now presented embodies my original research in literary and popular poetry in Malayālam. The importance of Eṣuttaccan in Malayālam literature lies in the fact that in him the popular and classical traditions of Malabar have combined to produce an outstanding literary achievement which inspired this literature's subsequent development and gave it a definite lead. The historical background and other influences that shaped his genius and work have not been investigated before, nor has a proper analysis of his complex personality been attempted. My endeavour has been to cover this unexplored field and fill the gap with the materials gathered through my independent study and original investigation.

The influence of social institutions and folklore on literary developments is very often ignored by scholars in Malayālam. I have attempted in my survey to trace their inter-relationship and thereby throw light on many dark corners in the history of Malayālam literature.

Some space has been given to the discussion of matters which are relevant to my study of E. but are not strictly scientific researches, viz. discussions on the plots of the Rāmāyanas, with attempts to correct what I believe to be erroneous popular views in this connection. I have dwelt at some length on these topics because of the nature of my theme, which is to present a complete view of E's personality.



his literary and religious activities, and the manifold influences that operated upon him. It has therefore been needful to analyse the various elements of the Rāma-saga which came down to him and were worked up by him; and so I have sought to shew the discrepancies of ideas between the primitive saga, the more sophisticated version of it presented by Vālmīki, and the still more advanced conception given in the Adhyātma-Rāmāyana. In doing this I have come into conflict with many cherished prejudices and devout beliefs of orthodoxy. Moreover I am aware that my arguments against the historicity of Vālmīki's picture of the Rākṣasas' kingdom may appear to western eyes somewhat elementary; most western scholars probably would be satisfied to take my main views on this matter for granted, and regard my arguments as superfluous. But I have thought it desirable to take account of conservative opinions that are still strong in India, and to address myself to the task of disproving them.

I have followed the system of transliteration adopted in the list of quarterly publications issued by the Government of Madras except in the case of  $\text{ś}$  for which I have used the symbol  $\text{Z}(\text{ś})$  to avoid confusion. In respect of words like Nāyar, Brāhman, Nāḍu and Madham (Nāir Brāhmin Nāṭu Maṭham) which have two accepted spellings, I have tried to be uniform as far as possible.



ABBREVIATIONS.

|              |                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| ADH:         | Adhyātmam.                     |
| A.R.         | Adhyātmā Rāmāyaṇam             |
| A.R. (MAL:). | .....Malayālam.                |
| BH:          | Bhāratam.                      |
| B.P.         | Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.              |
| B.           | Eṣuttaccan.                    |
| K. Arjuna    | Karta Vīryārguna               |
| K. Kila      | Kannada Kila                   |
| K.B.S.C.     | Kerala Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram. |
| K.P.         | Kṛṣṇashāstra                   |
| K.K.T.       | Kuñṇu Kuṭṭan Tampuran.         |
| M.BH:        | Mahābhāratam.                  |
| P. Rāma      | Parasū Rāma                    |
| U.R.         | Uttara Rāmāyaṇam.              |
| T.E.         | Tuñjatteṣuttaccan.             |
| V.R.         | Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam.             |



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Malayalam.

Aivar nāṭakam.

Arōmal Cēvakar - A ballad.

Candrōtsavam.

Cerusseri - Kṛṣṇappāṭṭu.

Eṣuttaccan. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.

Mahābhāratam.

Brahmānda Purāṇam.

Dēvi Māhātmyam.

Uttara Rāmāyaṇam.

Harināmakīrtanam ?

Cintāratnam ?

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Kamsavadham.



Kannassan

Mādhava Panikkar

" Rāma Panikkar

" Sankara Panikkar

Kālināṭakam

Kavanōḍayam (Periodical)

Kēraḷa Paṣama

Kōvunṇi Nedungādi

Kṛṣṇanunni Nāyar

Kṛṣṇa Piṣāroṭi (Āṭkur)

(editor)

Kuñṇu Kutṭan Tampuran

Maṣamangalam

Menon C.A.

Nārāyaṇa Menon Kuṇḍūr

Nārāyaṇa Panikkar

Nārāyaṇa Pillay P.K.

Punam

Paramēswara Iyer (Ullūr S)

Rāmacaritam

Rāma Kathappāṭṭu.

Rāman Pillai

Bhagavadgītā

Rāmāyaṇam

Bhāratam

Bhāgavatam

Sāvitrī Māhātmyam

Bhārata Māla.

Kēraḷa Kaṁmudi

Kēraḷa Caritram

Līlātilakam

Sāhityacaritam.

Mahābhārata

(Translation)

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Ballads of N. Malabar

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Prācīnamalayāla Matrakaḷ  
Nēcca

Kamba Rāmāyaṇa Caritram



Unṇunīli Sandēśam.

Unyāroa (A ballad)

Rasi Kāranjāni - Samasṛṣṭikal

(Periodical)

Vattōli Kandar Menon

A Ballad.

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| Lala Baig Nath                | Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa (Trans.)                 |
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| Macnicol (Nicol)              | Hindu Scriptures                           |
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| Seshaiyengar T.               | Dravidian India.                           |



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### SANSKRIT.

|                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aiterēya Brāhmaṇa                  |                 |
| Bhōja                              | Rāmāyaṇa Campu  |
| Jayadēva                           | Gīta Gōvindam   |
| Kautilya                           | Arthasāstra     |
| Lakṣmīdāsan                        | Śukasandēśam    |
| Meppattur<br>(Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatiri) | Nārāyaṇīyam     |
|                                    | Subhadrāharanam |
| Nīlakaṇṭhan                        | Ārya Bhaṭṭīyam  |
|                                    | Tatva Samgraham |
| Paramēśwaran Pōrri                 | Muhūrtapadavi.  |



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Kumbhakonam edition

Vātsyāyana

Kāmasūtra

TAMIL

Iḷankōvaṭigal

/  
Śilappatikāram

Tolkāppia Muni

Tolkāppiam.



A brief Survey of Malayalam Literature

before Ezuttaccan's time.

Chapter I.



Outstanding figures in all walks of life often eclipse lesser luminaries in the same field, who either lived before them or were their contemporaries. Even in modern times, when we have every facility for verifying our views on men of distinction, it is our experience that contributions of those who are not at the top, but who at the same time wield remarkable influence within their own sphere, are often ignored or even ascribed to greater men who engross attention. The phenomenon has added force when we are dealing with historical figures whose work left an <sup>an</sup>indelible impression on their contemporaries and continued to influence succeeding generations. It is small wonder, therefore, that a good number of Malayālis still think that there is hardly anything worth mentioning or knowing in Malayālam Literature before Ezuttaccan who they believe, is rightly called the <sup>1.</sup>Father of Letters, came with his dynamic personality. But scholars are not on that account to close their eyes to the realities of the case which have been brought to light by recent researches on the subject. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Malayālam literature alone. Vālmīki and Kālidāsa in Sanskrit

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1. The word Ezuttaccan is composed of two distinct parts. (a) Ezuttu = letters. (a) Accan = Father, or leader.



and Shakespeare in English, command by their extraordinary brilliance our all-absorbing attention, and we often do not think of other minor writers of the day. A closer study reveals that these minor ones often supply stimulus and inspiration to the greater giants, and it is essential that a knowledge of the former should be acquired as a pre-requisite for our study of the latter to enable us to estimate their worth and influence. In the case of our language considerable confusion, which is inevitable in the early stage of research, has arisen in the attempts to trace its early history, partly on account of the inadequacy of the materials available and partly on account of the personal predilections of scholars. The confusion is aggravated by the absence of a reliable political and social history of Malabar from the very beginning to modern times, while the peculiar features of the evolution of Malabar polity, which in its early stage presents no central figures controlling the events but a host of small representative assemblies called Kuttams, render the task of the historian exceedingly difficult.

In the circumstances a brief discussion of the origin of the Malayālam language will be helpful to a proper understanding of the history of



its literature.

The Sanskritic Origin.

The theory that is often advanced by the orthodox pandits, who are predominantly Sanskritic in their views, that Malayālam is derived from Sanskrit, can be dismissed easily, as it is against all principles of linguistics. The only justification for a consideration of the kind is the existence of a large number of Sanskrit words in the Malayālam language. The author of "Kēraḷa Kaumudī", whose authority is often quoted for this theory, opens his treatise with the following stanza -

" Sanskr̥ta himagiri gaḷitā                      2.  
Drāvida bhāṣa Kalindajā militā  
Kēraḷa bhāṣa ganga  
Viharatu me hr̥lsarasaśāṅgā."

This, divested of its poetic imagery, indicates a Sanskritic origin for the 'Kēraḷa Bhāṣa! Mr. Nedungādi only throws out random observations like this and does not discuss the question. He betrays his

1. A treatise on Malayālam grammar and rhetoric.  
By T.M. Kovunni Nedungādi, S. Malabar, 1895.

2. "May the Ganges of Kēraḷa Bhāṣa which rose from the Mountain of Himālaya and mingled with the Kalindajā of Dravidian language play in the Lake of my mind.



uncertainty in the next stanza through the expression -

1.  
Āryadrāviḍa Vāgajāta  
Kēraliyōkti Kanyakā.

which means that it is derived from both with no definite emphasis on the priority of either.

Apparently he has not considered the question seriously and has only attempted poetic imagery, suggested probably by the abundance of words of both Sanskrit and Dravidian origin in the language. If words are indicative of the origin of a language, all the living languages of the world have to be traced not to one language only but to a number of languages. English will have to be derived from German, French and Latin languages, and French from "Roman slang and provincial latin raised on Celtic soil".<sup>2.</sup> In Malayālam there are also a good number of Arabic<sup>3.</sup> and Persian words, and in modern times English words are also finding their way into it.

1. The Maid of Kēraḷa Bhāṣa born of Ārya and Drāviḍa languages.

2. Page 146 - Short History of Indian Literature.  
By Ernst Horowitz.

3. Common words like - Karār, Takarār.  
(agreement, obstacle or difficulty).



The existence of foreign words in a language therefore indicates only the contact - political, social, cultural, or commercial - between the different peoples who speak the languages concerned. In the case of Sanskrit the contact continued for centuries and remained a part of the culture of India, as the Āryans, who spoke that language, made India their own and never returned to their original home. Its influence on the languages of India was consequently abiding. By the time Sanskrit extended its sway to Southern India, the languages of the South had attained a level of development which permitted only absorption of the foreign element but not radical alteration in themselves. This fact is evident from the general Sanskrit vocabulary and grammatical structure of N.Indian languages, in which the Sanskrit contact occurred much earlier and was more in the nature of a transformation, while the languages of South India, owing to their comparative isolation from the north, enjoyed an independent development, retaining their individual characteristics, taking from Sanskrit only what they lacked or were in need of. In grammatical principles and structure they differed fundamentally from Sanskrit, which only enriched their vocabulary. There is no doubt that Sanskrit was for a long time the language of culture and



scholarship in the whole of India, as Latin was in Europe, and that scholars who used vernaculars as media of expression often unconsciously introduced 'Sanskritisms', if I may use the expression - in their writings, which later on profoundly affected their literary development. It was a case of assimilation and not annihilation, as happened in the North. In the case of Tamil, which had already developed an advanced literature, much earlier than its sister languages, such as Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam, even assimilation was not an easy process, as it offered strong resistance to preserve its integrity. The other South Indian languages which lent themselves to assimilation regulated it in such a way that the result only enriched them without impairing their individuality. Indiscriminate importations of Sanskrit grammatical forms into Malayālam were not only discouraged but even subjected to merciless criticism, even at an early period by Sanskritists like Tōlan.<sup>1</sup> A serious work on Malayalam grammar and rhetoric entitled 'Līlātilakam' appeared in the 14th Century, in which an attempt was made to analyse the linguistic tendencies of the Malayālam language and systematise Sanskrit borrowings.<sup>3</sup>

1. Vide for example his criticism of verbal nouns in which Sanskrit terminations were added to Malayālam roots.

2. This is written in Sanskrit with examples in Malayālam. This has been edited with a Malayālam translation and commentary by the famous scholar A. Krishna Pisaroti.

3. vide appendix. 1 for a summary of the work.



A distinction was made between indigenous and imported elements, and they were classified as 'Maṇipravāḷam' and 'Pāṭṭu' respectively. It was not an arbitrary division but a distinction based on some definite maxims. He defines Maṇipravāḷam as 'Bhāṣa Saṅkṛīṭayōgam', i.e. the union or the mixture of bhāṣa (Malayāḷam) and Saṅkṛīṭ<sup>1.</sup> He prescribes certain rules to regulate the mixture of the two languages and discusses at length four combinations<sup>2.</sup> which must have been in vogue in his times. His definition of 'Pāṭṭu'<sup>3.</sup> is very significant. He insists on a preponderance of Malayāḷam words over the Sanskrit ones with 'Yaduka'<sup>4.</sup> and 'Mōṇa'<sup>5.</sup> as an essential part of the composition. As examples of Pāṭṭu Līlātilakam gives extracts from certain works which are unknown now. The quotations form ample evidence of the fact that Malayāḷam at that age had attained a high degree of development as an independent language and possessed sufficient literary material to need a classification of the kind. In other words the existence of Malayāḷam as a developed language before scholars in Kēraḷa thought of introducing Sanskrit words in it is proclaimed by the work 'Līlātilakam', which cuts at the root of the theory that ascribes a Sanskrit origin to the Malayāḷam language.

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1. Vide appendix 1. for an enunciation of these rules.

2. Vide appendix 1.

3. Vide page 16 of the work.

4 and 5. Two kinds of rhymes in dravidian languages.



### Tamil Origin.

We will now proceed to examine the theory that Malayālam is an off shoot of the Tamil language. The copious Dravidian vocabulary found in Malayālam language forms the basis of this theory, which bears testimony to considerable confusion of thought on the part of scholars who have endeavoured to consider the problem. The affinities of the two languages in grammatical structure and form have been to a considerable extent responsible for the lack of clear thinking on the subject. The discovery of Rāmacaritam<sup>1</sup> and Rāmakathappāṭṭu<sup>2</sup> in S.Travancore and the Jewish grants,<sup>3</sup> which are predominately Tamil in composition and tone, have provided additional arguments to the protagonists of the theory. It is therefore necessary that the question should be gone into at length to see what are exactly the implications of the various arguments advanced in support of the theory. At the very outset one point has to be cleared. The term Tamil denotes not a single homogeneous tongue but a group of dialects or more or less closely allied varieties of Dravidian speech that were (and still are) current in the so-called Tamil or Cēra country, which according to tradition

- 
- 1.) Two works of a bilingual character dealing with
  - 2.) the events described in the Yuddha Kānda of Rāmāyaṇa.
  3. Two documents in copper plate issued in the 9th century A.D. by Bhāskara Ravi Varma Perumāḷ, the then ruling overlord of the west coast, granting monopoly of trade in certain articles to the Jews of Cranganore.



extends from Vengadam on the north to Comorin on the south. These dialects differed from one another about as much as did the various forms of Anglo-Saxon spoken in England and the Lowlands of Scotland before the Norman Conquest. Owing to circumstances unknown to us, one of them became the sole medium of higher literature among the Tamils, and hence underwent a process of increasing refinement which made it into the so-called *Sen-damil* or "correct Tamil", the classical language. The other varieties are called *Koḍun-damil*; native tradition asserts that they were spoken in 12 regions of the Tamil country, and regards them with some contempt. One of them the speech of *Vēṇāḍu* and adjacent districts, was the parent of *Malayālam*, which gradually evolved, receiving influences in course of time from both *Sen-damil* and Sanskrit, until it reached its present form. It is the only dialect of *Koḍun-damil* that has developed a polished literary form. Besides, as Mr.K.M.Panikkar points out, the term 'Tamil' denoted something more than what is understood by the expression in modern times. Ancient writers often used it in the sense of vernacular language or *Bhāṣa*<sup>2</sup>, as we often come across references like *Pāṇḍi-Tamil*, *Karṇāṭaka-Tamil* in Tamil classics. The language of Malabar is referred to as *Malanāt-Tamil*

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1. Indian Art and Letters, Vol.II, No.2, Page 81 (1927)

2. The word *Bhāṣa* also has a similar story. In *Malayālam* it is often used in the sense 'Malayālam language' even from the time of the author of *Līlātilakam*, who defines *Manipravāḷam* as "*Bhāṣa-Saṁskṛtayōgam*".



by Tamil grammarians like Tōlkāppia Muni, whose work is the earliest complete grammar of Tamil that has survived. In that famous work Malanāt-Tamil is regarded as distinct from Sen-Tamil, and is classed as one variety of Koḍun-Tamil dialects, ~~and~~ evidence from Tamil classics has given room for difference of views about the extent of Tamilakam in ancient times. No scholar has so far made any serious suggestion tracing Kanarese or Telugu to Tamil, and it is strange that an attempt of the kind is made in respect of Malayālam alone, which stands in the same sort of relationship to Tamil as those branches of the Dravidian family. Among western scholars whose views on the subject deserve every attention the names of Dr. Gundert and Dr. Caldwell must be prominently mentioned. The former, though <sup>he has</sup> often referred to Malayālam as a sister language, is inclined to the view that it is one of the Koḍun-Tamil category, while the latter is more emphatic in his assertion that Malayālam is an offshoot of Tamil. Both scholars have not examined the question in detail, and it

- 
1. The author of the ancient Tamil grammar Tolkāppiam. Page 26. Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram.
  2. Page 12-14. The Tamils 1800 years ago by V. Kanakasabhai vide appendix I for a note on the subject.
  3. The author of Malayālam English Dictionary, and Malayālam Grammar and several articles on Malayālam language. "It has been found difficult to draw the line of demarcation between Malayālam and Tamil words. These two languages of old differed rather as dialects of the same member of the Dravidian family than as separate languages." -Page 3 of the preface to the Dictionary.
  4. Page 1 of his Malayālam grammar.
  5. Page 10 - Comparative Dravidian Grammar.



is not possible to refer to any of their specific arguments for scrutiny and answer. The credit of having analysed the subject from the point of view of a grammarian and linguist goes to the late lamented Professor A.R. Rāja Rājavarma. . . . The learned introduction to his monumental work entitled "Kēraḷa Pāṇinīyam" opens with the statement that the ancient form of Malayāḷam was Koṭṭun-Tamil, which is based on the examination of important cognate words in both the languages such as those like Kaṇ (കണ് ), cevi (ചേവി ), and rules of grammar relating to gender and case. The same argument applies to other Dravidian languages, and its force as a special plea in favour of the Tamil origin theory is next to nothing. In the course of his arguments he is constrained to point out six distinctive features of Malayāḷam which distinguish it from Tamil as an independent language, and which, he holds, Malayāḷam acquired in the course of its evolution after its separation from Tamil. This part of his discussion is of immense value, and in fact constitutes his main contribution to the problem. So long as the date of this separation is uncertain, the distinctive features pointed out by him can be also taken to prove the opposite view as the author of Līlātilakam pertinently asked six centuries ago. His argument about 'Kṣilōpasamgraham', literally retention of old usages,



amounts to an admission of the separation of Malayālam<sup>13.</sup> from the original Dravidian family before Sen-Tamil developed a literature of its own. In tracing the beginnings of a language, undue reliance on its literature is often misleading. The growth of literature is dependent on various factors, historical or otherwise, the absence of which may render it a mere medium for the exchange of uncultivated thought, a patois. Languages like Puṣṭu of Afghanistan and Tulu of S.Kanara have not even developed an alphabet of their own. But there is no reason to doubt their antiquity on that ground, which is proved by the facts of history.

The evidence based on Rāmacaritam and the Jewish grants does not stand scrutiny, as materials relating to the same period or even an earlier date available in north and central Kēraḷa show a different tendency. The personal endings of verbs which form a prominent feature of Tamil are absent

1. The language of the Bantas and Embrāns of S.Kanara. Though it has no alphabet, it seems to have developed a kind of literature. It has strong affinities with Kanarese, Malayālam, and Tamil, and the alphabet of either of the former two is used by writers.

2. Vettattu Swarūpam Arīyēndatēndennāl:- Nammute Swarūpattilēkku Varēndumtuka Iccaran Vakkal Kanni Nayaril atakkēndiyirikkunnu. Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram by R.Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar, vol.1, p.10.

3. For example :-

|           |   |              |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| TAMIL     | - | Avan Vandān. |
| MALAYĀLAM | - | Avan Vannu.  |



them. Travancore history records repeated invasions of S.Travancore by Pāndiyan Kings, and the territorial division south of Quilon was always under Tamilian influence. It has been bilingual with a strong Tamilian bias in character. Both Rāmacaritam and Rāma Katha Pāṭṭu belong to this part of Travancore, and it is easy therefore to account for their Tamilian tone. The same argument applies to the semi-dramatic poems like <sup>1.</sup> Kamsavadham and <sup>2.</sup> Aivarnāṭakam, <sup>3.</sup> which bear a striking similarity in language and expression to Rāmacaritam and had their origin in the eastern borderlands of Malabar. The spoken tongue of Kasargode S.Kanara, which was once a part of Malabar, with its Kanarese bias, tells the same story. The literary document called Payyannūr Pāṭṭōla if discovered may strengthen the argument. The Tamilian tone of the Jewish grants is due to the fact that it was granted by a Perumāḷ who was no doubt a Tamilian, and it was usual to use the ruler's language for all important public documents in those times.

Besides, during the Perumāḷ period Tamil was the court

1. The language of ballads like "Iravi-Kuṭṭi-Pillai-Pōr-Pāṭṭu", which are comparatively recent, will prove this fact.
2. The story of Kamsa rendered into songs for stage purposes. Its vocabulary and tone bear witness to Tamilian affinities. It is a popular entertainment in Cittūr and other villages of the Palghat Taluq, S.Malabar.
3. This deals with the story of the Pāṇḍavas. It is on a par with Kamsavadham.



language and the language of culture, as Sanskrit was in the period that followed. This fact explains why Silappatikāram, the famous Tamil classic ascribed to <sup>1.</sup> Ilankōvatikal, the brother of Śeran Cenkuttuvan, was written in Tamil and not in the language of the country.

The question of the personal endings or verbs raises a philological issue. It is still a matter of doubt, whether Malayālam dropped them after its separation from the original parental tongue or the Tamil introduced them as a reform when its literature developed and strict grammatical principles came to be enforced by writers. The term Sen-Tamil, which like Sanskṛitam implies the pure Tamil as distinguished from the impure spoken Tamil or Koḍun Tamil, indicates the cleavage that once existed between the spoken and written tongue. Malayālam has witnessed no such phenomenon. Philologists often assert that language in its early stages is characterised by simplicity of construction and usage, and then in the course of its growth introduces numerous restrictions to preserve its purity and dignity from vulgar influences. If this view is to be accepted, it has to be assumed that personal endings of verbs are a subsequent innovation and their absence denotes an earlier stage. If on the other hand it is held that personal endings of verbs are an unsafe

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1. The name of a Perumāl who ruled the Cēra Kingdom with Cranganore, (Cochin State) as his headquarters.



guide to the development of a language and that they form only one of its peculiarities the argument does not lead us to any positive conclusion.<sup>1.</sup> On philological grounds, therefore, it is not easy to maintain, as often assumed by some, that Malayalam as a language came much later in point of time than Tamil, inasmuch as the evidence available points to a parallel development of both.

The prevalence of the matriarchal system<sup>\*</sup> of inheritance among the Nāyars and Tiyyas/Malabar is another factor to be reckoned with before we arrive at a definite conclusion on the issue.<sup>2.</sup> Sociologists do not agree as to the priority of Matriarchy to Patriarchy. Some even regard both as independent developments arising out of the peculiar conditions under which they grew, but the majority seems to favour the view that Matriarchy was an earlier phase in the evolution of society when it was in an unsettled state, and that Patriarchy synchronised with the dawn of the sense of stability and permanent relationship among the members of the primitive clan. In either case the conclusion that followed the other lacks sufficient evidence in its support, and it seems reasonable to recognise the fundamental difference between the cultural background of both. Even supposing that a transition from one to the other took place in S.India, it must have been

1. Dr. L. D. Barnett, the well known orientalist is of this view.

2. (a) Primitive Society, Ch. I. by Hartland. Vide appendix I  
(b) See also p. 76. At Home with the Savage by J. H. Draper



at a time unknown to recorded history. It may look strange that people who were separated only by a range of mountains differed so widely between themselves in general culture and social usages. Possibly this natural barrier once stood in the way of their mutual contact except on occasions when men of heroic mould seeking adventure crossed the mountains to meet their neighbours, not necessarily on friendly terms. Even if there had been constant contact, it is doubtful whether one system would have undergone material changes or merged into the other. Centuries of Perumal rule governed by the patriarchal system of inheritance were followed by the restoration of the original system (matriarchal) in respect of royal successions in Kêrala. This is a fact for the social historian to note and elucidate. Either the Malayâlis and Tamilians remained without contact for centuries developing their respective institutions, or they belonged to two distinct racial stocks that came in contact with each other in one stage of their evolution and retained some common features as a result thereof. Both clung to their systems of inheritance, though historical events forced them to live together with some time, without being deeply influenced one by the other from the earliest times to the present day.

Differences in cultural traditions are by no means an isolated phenomenon, as they extend their influence on other aspects of life also, particularly on the language of the people concerned, which constitutes the most



significant factor in the evolution and growth of human society. Cultural and linguistic affinities are inseparable where the existence of one is doubtful it is theoretically unsound to assume the other.

These considerations form the basis of the position seriously assumed by scholars like Āttur Krishna Pisharoṭi<sup>1.</sup>, C.N. Ananta Rāmaya Śāstri<sup>2.</sup>, and R. Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar<sup>3.</sup> that Malayālam, though belonging to the Dravidian family, had an independent development subject to the influence of Tamil at one stage and that of Sanskrit at another. The large number of folk-songs - many of which still remain to be collected<sup>4.</sup> - which contain no trace of Tamilian or Sanskrit influence strongly supports this contention. The changes which a literature often undergoes do not generally affect the spoken tongue, which is preserved in ballads and folk songs in its unadulterated form, and in determining the linguistic tendencies of a language the folk songs are far better guides than pure<sup>5.</sup> productions. The group of songs known as Vatakkān Pāṭṭukal,

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1. The introductory portion of his work entitled Sāhityacaritam is devoted to a discussion of this theme.
  2. Once Professor of Malayālam in the Arts College, Travancore. In his articles on the derivation of Dravidian words he expounds the theory of a parent language for all the current languages of S. India, from which Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam grew later.
  3. Pages 15-28 of his Kēraḷa bhāṣa Sāhityacaritam.
  4. Page 3 of the introduction by Percy Macqueen, I.C.S. to the Ballads of N. Malabar Vol. I by the author.
  5. Vide the author's Ballads of N. Malabar, Vol. I Madras University publication (1935).



1. caver songs of S.Malabar, and various other songs about the heroes in different parts of Kēraḷa, and the Tōrṛam  
 2. Pāṭṭukal constitute this variety of literature (which so far has not received the amount of recognition it deserves from scholars). It may be noted in passing that the desire to preserve the purity of the language and exhibit its innate worth and potentiality as a vehicle of literary expression, led some writers, especially poets, in modern times to adopt a style called Pacca Malayālam ( pure Malayālam), in which words other than pure Malayālam were deliberately rejected.

The foregoing discussion gives us an idea of the various influences at work in the shaping of the Malayālam language and literature at various stages of its history. In the earliest stage, ballads, folk songs, devotional songs and their innumerable varieties form the

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1. Songs about the heroes who fought and died at the Mamānkam Festival at Tirunāvāya on behalf of their Rāja of Walluvanād defying the authority of the Zamoring.

2. Religious devotional songs about Badrakālī, Ayyappan and Vēttakkaran, and other ancient deities of Malabar.

The following is an extract from Dārkavadham :-

"Nālvēliyennatuppu Kīri  
 Poikkitāramenna vellikkītārameṛri  
 Mānayilum cōlayinnu nīr Kōri  
 Koṇṭuvannu....Kaññi veccu vāngngi.....  
 Eṣu vattam Kōri Upajīvikattutāngngi.....".

- 3.(a) "Nālu Bhāṣa Kāvyaṅgal" by Kundūr Nārāyaṇa Menon.  
 (b) "Nēreṣa" by Mahākavi Ullūr S.Paramēśwara Aiyar. Instances in point etc.  
 (c) Essays like "Sama Śrēṭikal" in Raṣikarājini.



dominant feature. These had an uninterrupted growth till the beginning of the Perumāḷ period, when Tamil became the official language and scholars began to cultivate it. This period naturally left its mark on literature and official documents, which were predominantly Tamilian in tone and character. It should not be forgotten at the same time, that this change affected only the literature and not the spoken tongue, which found expression in ballads and compositions of that kind, and continued to be the chief medium for the expression of popular emotions and ideas till comparatively modern times. The Tamilian influence lingered even after the end of the Perumāḷ period, which according to a majority of writers synchronised with the commencement of the Kollam era (825 A.D.). The exit of the Perumāḷs from the political stage was the signal for the leading communities - Nāyars and Nambūdiris to step into their place, and they through a common understanding wielded the secular and religious authority between themselves. Political power naturally went to the fighting Nāyars, while the Nambūdiris became custodians of religion. It was a time when religion had a firm hold on people, and political authority often yielded to the dictation of religion. The Nambūdiris, owing to their peculiar position of alliance with the royal families and Nāyar aristocrats, exercised enormous influence on the politics of the day and took advantage



of the situation to consolidate their position. They patronised Sanskrit, and a systematic cultivation of that language and literature became the fashion of the day among the upper classes. The tendency to introduce Sanskrit words into popular language and literature made its appearance for the first time during this period.

2. The Vidūṣakan in 'Kūṭiyāṭṭam', who contributed the element of humour, had to cater to an audience consisting mostly of Nambūdiris and Nāyar aristocrats. To win their applause he had to exhibit his cleverness in the Sanskrit language. As all of them would not be equally conversant in that language, he was obliged to use a mixture of both Sanskrit and Malayalam. As he was keen more on humour than linguistic propriety, his mixture often verged on the ridiculous. When this device became a regular feature, such compositions grew in volume, making exception the rule. The result was the growth of a new style of composition called 'Maṇipravāḷam', in which Sanskritisms dominated. It appealed to a class of writers who

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1. There is even now a custom among the Nambūdiri Brāhmins that their boys should speak Sanskrit during their Upanayanam period - the period when they receive their instruction in the Vēdas, which extends up to the 16th year and are invested with the sacred thread. This became a mere formality in course of time, and a knowledge of half a dozen words relating to certain essential things often answered the purpose.
  2. A kind of histrionic art which is exclusively practised by the Cākkiyār community in Kēraḷa. They staged only Sanskrit dramas, introducing many novel features in it. Ordinarily a performance lasts for eight days.



produced a good number of manipravāla campus during the period. The merciless distortion of the language of the people under this process became so severe in certain cases that satirist like Tōlan were provoked to hold it up for

1. ridicule. While it must be conceded that this tendency 7. The Author of Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu, a among scholars resulted in the production of some first rate 2. campus like Rāmāyaṇa Campus by Pannam and Bhāṣa Naisadha Campus 3. by Maṣṣamangalam and Sandēśakāvyaṇs like Unnūṇī 4. 11 Sandēśam by ~~Unnūṇī 11 Sandēśam~~ 12 Sandēśam,

it has also to be admitted that the original genius of the Malayālam language suffered considerably under this hybrid experiment. There were instances in which Sanskrit slōkas with not even a single Malayālam word appeared in these campus 5. and passed for a bhāṣa composition. Fortunately this development attracted only a limited class of writers. Poets 6. 7. like Kannāṣṣan and Ceruṣṣeri used Sanskrit words with malayālam endings and preserved the individuality of their mother tongue. Their method tended only to enrich the

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1. Adding Sanskrit endings to Malayālam words was one of the devices of the Vidūṣakan in Kūṭiyāṭṭam. When that spread to literature, Tōlan is believed to have ridiculed it by compositions of the following kind -

Mulaññāsana sṛṣṭinkal Vilangam cērjalōoane.

Cēr = mud and jam is a formative suffix in Sanskrit to indicate the meaning 'born of' - thus Cēr-ja = 'mud - born'.

2, 3 & 4. These are referred to in detail in the course of the Chapter.

5. For example the slōka that begins with

"Vāgam me Sṛṇu Vallabhēti Vāoane Vaiyyātya-  
māṇadyato" - in Naisadha Campus.

6. The author of Kannāṣṣa Rāmāyaṇam and the youngest member of the Niraṇam family.

7. The Author of Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu, a classic in Malayālam literature



Malayālam vocabulary, but never interfered with its innate beauty. The other current, which reflected the indigenous elements and found expression in popular ballads and songs, showed the potentiality of the language. No bias of any kind disturbed its simple and dignified flow, which was inspired by the country's natural beauty and the exploits of its heroes.

These developments existed as parallel currents, and the style of a work depended upon the personal predilections of the author. Sanskritists usually chose the Campu style, and the purists sang their 'native woodnotes wild'. Eminent writers like Kannassan and Cerusseri, who were the real inheritors of the genuine linguistic and literary traditions, took into account the new tendencies and endeavoured to fuse the best elements of both. They aimed at the creation of a new literary style, which assumed definite shape with Eṣuttaccan, who by combining the charming beauty of the native tongue with the rich variety of the Sanskrit set with literary standard for all times. This general survey will be helpful in understanding the general tone and literary merits of typical works that appeared before E. Accan.



I will briefly notice them below.

Rāmacaritam and Rāmakathappāttu-

10th Century A.D.

These two works are considered by Mahākavi Ullūr and others to be the earliest literary works in Malayālam. Their style and the preponderance of genuine Tamil words contained therein and the place of their origin however, belie this contention. The marked difference in language and the mode of expression noticeable in contemporary records found in other parts of Malabar confirms the suspicion<sup>2</sup> aroused by their linguistic peculiarities. Another school of literary criticism has definitely declared them to be bilingual productions. Their literary merit is beyond question, and on that ground they are no doubt assets to the Malayālam or Tamil literature, as the case may be. The "Yuddhakānda" of the Rāmāyana story is the theme for both. The realistic description of the Rāma-Rāvana war is undoubtedly a remarkable poetic achievement which has earned for the authors an undying fame and a permanent place in the world of letters. One of the Travancore Rājas is supposed to be the author of Rāmacaritam, and Rāmakathappāttu is assigned to one Ayyi Pilliāśān.

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1. Vide introduction to an edition of the work published by Mahākavi Ullur Parameswara Aiyar M.A., B.L., under the title 'Prācīna Malayāla Mātrkākal'.

2. Vide page 163-180 of Kōrala Bhāṣa Sāhityacaritram, Vol. I.



Dārukavadham.

1.  
This belongs to the category of Tōrrampāttus,<sup>1</sup> which can be safely assigned to the period of Rāmacaritam if not earlier. There is no trace of Tamil influence in this. Its general tone and expression entitles it to be counted as the earliest literary production in genuine Malayalam. As it is meant to be sung at ceremonial rituals performed for the propitiation of the Mother (goddess Kālī) its vivid description and effective narration couched in the most melodious language have a special appeal. The story of Kālī's encounter with Dāruka, well-known in Kēraḷa folklore and his heroic death at the hands of the Mother, that is told in this devotional poem, has a majesty all its own. One has to hear it sung if its beauty is to be appreciated. When the scene changes from one of serenity to that of challenge and combat, the language and tune also vary to suit the occasion, which culminates in the riotous dance of the worshippers and the inspired utterance of the oracle, which gives the finishing touch to the performance. Though the popular name of the piece is Dārukavadham, the author has called it Kālinātakam.<sup>2</sup> It is really a drama of dance and song preceded by ceremonial worship; and its effect on the audience is tremendous. Straight narration in select words familiar to the average man, recited with an artistic eye to their effect and variety so as to suit the

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1. Vide page 19.

2. Literally 'the drama of Kālī'.



context, gives the song a tone and dignity at once admirable and unique. It is a pity that the people at large have lost touch with its poetic beauty, owing to the monopolistic tendency of a class of Kāli worshippers who buried its sacredness in superstition and concealed it from public gaze.

### The Dravidian Period.

The early period of Malayālam literature which we have hitherto surveyed may be said to have come to an end with the disappearance of the Perumāls, i.e. 825 A.D. although such arbitrary divisions in literary histories are often misleading. Literary influences take time to establish themselves, and they disappear also gradually at the same time leaving some permanent traces of their contact. The period that followed may be termed, from the nature of its general tendencies, 'Dravidian', as the language used in it was still relatively free from excessive Sanskritism. Though the political influence of the Perumāls no longer had any living force, the cultural traditions left by them had already borne fruit and begun to affect the literary outlook of the people. We have so far not found any poetical work of outstanding merit belonging to this period, which seems to have inclined more towards scholarship and erudition than creative endeavour. Such a tendency often favours the development of prose, which is essentially the medium of intellectual effort, while poetry is the language of



imagination and intuition, which stimulate all original<sup>1.</sup> works of art. A Malayālam commentary upon the Arthasāstra, which bears a family resemblance to the language of the Jewish grants, is therefore, a typical work of the period. The Ms. contains only the commentary and not the original 'Sūtras'. The commentary is not of the nature of an explanation of the literal meaning, but elucidates, or discourses upon the points raised by Kautilya, the author of the original work. The customs of Malabar are in many respects peculiar, and where Kautilya's theories do not apply ~~xxxxx~~, the commentator draws the attention of the reader to them.<sup>2.</sup> The archaism of the language makes the commentary a hard nut for the modern Malayāli reader to crack. It is a remarkable work, throwing considerable light on the dark corners of Kautilya's theories, and is the only one of its kind in the South Indian languages. References to contemporary customs and manners, particularly about royal succession and Marumakkattāyam system, are of particular interest to the social historian.

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1. A portion of this has been published recently by the Travancore government, the Malayālam Department of the Madras University is now engaged on a critical edition of the work.

2. The Madras University edition which is being prepared contains explanatory notes for such expressions and usages.







all the imageries and figures of speech with which we are familiar in poetry, and is entertaining to a degree. The very complex nature of the literature defied any attempt at standardisation; but the general framework on which the art is based is fundamentally the same throughout. The difference is in the detailed execution and the presentation of the themes. We find its counterpart in the 'Prabandhams' of Cākkiyārs' of the succeeding age, who entertained the higher classes of society in temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva.

The present writer has had access to two or three Mss. of this "Kūttukavi", as it is called. Each varied considerably from the other, but there were substantial agreements too. If printed, they would run into 2 or 3 volumes of four hundred pages each. One volume<sup>1</sup> was published a few years ago by a member of the profession.

#### The Sanskritic period - 12th to 16th Century A.D.

##### Unṇunīli Sandēśam.

This period witnessed a good number of notable contributions to Malayāḷam literature, although a vast majority of them betray their hybrid character too glaringly. The interest of Malayāḷam writers seems to have centred on three main branches of Sanskrit literature, viz. the Sandēśa Kāvyaṃ, the Campu, and the Khaṇḍa Kāvyaṃs. Among the

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1. He has only published the Kambāṛamāyana Story. The discourses that form the bulk of the literature have been omitted, perhaps for professional reasons.

Kambāṛamāyana Caritam by A. Rāman Pillai.



Sandēśa Kāvyaṃ Unṇunīli Sandēśam is pre-eminent. It takes its name from the heroine Unṇunīli of Vaṭakkankūr, in E. Travancore, and is written on the model of Kālidāsa's Meghasandēśa (the cloud messenger). While Kālidāsa has employed the inanimate cloud as messenger,<sup>1.</sup> his fourteenth century Malayālam imitator entrusts the message to a king whose name is Ādityavarman. The name of the hero is not mentioned, but he is believed to be a Rāja.<sup>x</sup> The poem opens with a description of the dawn at Trivandrum, where the hero was dropped by a Yakṣi,<sup>2.</sup> who had carried him away while asleep from the bedroom of his beloved. By chance he sees there Ādityavarman who is requested to deliver his message to his love, from whom he was mercilessly separated by the mischievous nymph. The route he is to take is described in detail. The

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1. Some prefer birds as messengers: for example Sukasandēśam by Lakṣmidāsan Hambūdiri and Kōkila Sandēśam by Uddanda Sāstri of Tanjore. Both the works are in Sanskrit, and belong to this period. The scenes in both are laid in Malabar.

2. A celestial being that interferes in the love affairs of men.

x. Scholars have raised a controversy on this, but the point is still unsettled. The status of the messenger suggests that another Rāja is the hero. There is also room for a fresh theory that both the author and the hero are the same and the events described are purely imaginary although the characters are real.



descriptions of places possess considerable historical value, as they abound in references to contemporary royal personages, throwing light on the histories of their dynasties. The mention of Virakēraḷavarma, the Rāja of Kollam, who seems to have extended his conquests beyond the Ghats to Madura and Tinnevely, is particularly important.

Its lyrical fevour, enlivened by personal touches, constitutes the main charm of this piece of literature, in which love in its subjective aspect is the dominant sentiment. There is also considerable scope for the poet to exhibit his descriptive power. As a Sandēśam Unṇunīli Sandēśam can hold its own against any other masterpieces of its kind in Sanskrit or other languages, and is decidedly one of the classics of Malayāḷam literature.

### The "Campus" and The "Prabandhams".

#### The "Campus".

Campu, as already noted, is a composition in mixed prose and verse. Its poetry follows the rules of Sanskrit prosody, but its prose is not ordinary prose. It has rhythmic flow, harmonious sound combinations alliteration, and in certain places rhymes, too. The Ōṭṭan Tullal type of composition, which Kuncan Nambiyār popularised by his humorous works centuries later, has much in common,

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1. Called Sambhōga Sṛṅgāra, in the technical language of Sanskrit rhetoricians.



the  
 with the prose in/Campus. Manipravālam writers appear to have started this style of Campu prose in imitation of the prose of Sanskrit Campus, but their sense of music, born of their familiarity with their/<sup>own</sup>indigenous songs, induced them to introduce an element of rhythm into it and give it a character more suited to poetry than for prose. It runs on lines eminently fitted for narration. The percentage of Malayālam words which suited their style better than foreign words was naturally higher in prose than in the poetical parts. In descriptions the lines run on without stop as ideas are added like links to a chain. The monotony of the long-drawn stanzas written in Sanskrit metres is often relieved by the vigour and continuity of these lines, which carry the reader on the wings of their music and impresses him, with the virtues of variety. Episodes from the Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata, the inexhaustible store-house of oriental poetry<sup>1.</sup> and romance, usually form the themes of these compositions. As these themes give no scope for originality in the plot or sequence of events in the story, the poets resort to various devices, viz. introduction of extraneous matter and attention to details. Reference to contemporary social usages or personalities is one of their favourite devices. This is often accompanied by satirical comments implied<sup>2.</sup>

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1. Cellūr mahātmyam and Tenkailāssnāthodayam are exceptions to this rule. These deal with the legends about the two temples of Cellūr and Trichūr.

2. Nambiyār cultivated it as an art.



rather than explicit. The figure of speech of *Slēṣa* is the medium that is usually used for these comments, and generally Campu writers are very skilful in it. It demands extraordinary poetic talent and marvellous command of language.

This species of literature was very much in demand among the *Cākkyārs* for their 'Kūttu'.<sup>1.</sup> In fact it was the 'Kūttu' that created a demand for this special variety of composition. The Kūttu was an essential item during festivals in temples of Viṣṇu and Śiva, as was the *Pāvakūttu* in *Kālī* temples. The *Harikatha* and *Kālakṣēpams* are its counterpart in the Tamil districts, but there is one notable difference between the two. *Kālakṣēpams* are devotional in their form and technique, and have music as an integral part, but in *Cākkyār Kūttu* music has no place, and humour is its dominant note. Devotion is left to the option of the reciter, and is never a compulsory item.

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1. This is one of the most interesting and cultural institutions in Kēraḷa. It consists of humorous narration of purāṇic stories by *Cākkyārs* (professional reciters) for the edification of the worshippers during festival seasons. The *Cākkyārs* humour and powers of satire are proverbial. He cleverly introduces contemporary events and personalities into his narration, and his comments become all the more biting and severe in tone when the persons concerned are present, and had a salutary effect on society. Royalty and Aristocracy usually form the victims of his satire. As there was no other means of ventilating public grievances in those days, *Cākkyārs* were considered to be the spokesmen of the people.



The privileges which the Cākkyār enjoyed at these performances bear ample testimony to the importance of his role in the general scheme of society in those days. He was licensed, so to speak, to laugh at the whole world, excluding himself of course. Even Kings were not free from the wide range of his satire.<sup>1.</sup> The convention that a Cākkyār should not be disturbed during his discourse by questions or answers to his comments and that he should make his own selection of the topic for his performance is even now adhered to. The arrangement gave him every freedom and facility to choose a suitable theme into which the events or personalities upon which he wanted to comment could be conveniently introduced. The demand which grew in course of time for a similar institution outside the temple indicates its immense popularity and the realisation of its advantages by the people at large. It led to the creation of a new practice called 'Pāṭhakam', which had none of the ceremonial formalities of 'Cākkyārkūttu' but retained all its cultural features with the further advantage that there was a wider public to enjoy it. While the Cākkyārkūttu should never be performed outside the temple precincts, the Pāṭhakam could be conducted in any decent house of the locality. The new institution found a new class of

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1. One King of Cochin who is known in history as 'Saktan Rāja' when he was subjected to severe criticism by a Cākkyār took objection to his remarks and killed him on the spot. This is the only instance of its kind in the annals of the institution.



professionals called 'Nambiyārs' as its custodians, who occupied a slightly lower scale in the social sphere than the  
 1.  
 Cākkyārs.

The literature which falls into the category of the 'Campus' and the 'Prabandhams' is indeed prodigious in bulk. It no doubt belongs to the Maṇipravāla variety, and is highly Sanskritic in tone and character. There is considerable scope for individual talent. Neither the Cākkyār nor the Nambiyār is bound by the literature that is supplied to him, and forms his chief inspiration. He generally takes up a most typical passage, the meaning of which he interprets or elucidates. It is the method of his interpretation that calls for the display of his personal talent, which by the way is the most entertaining part of his performance. In the course of his exposition every conceivable topic will be brought in. Each Cākkyār or Nambiyār handles a situation in his own way, which, infuses freshness into anotherwise monotonous purāṇic episode. Their interpretations appear to be extempore, but have a genuine literary background, as they are generally good scholars trained by able teachers that have preceded them in the line. Though themes were more or less identical, variety in the method formed the soul of the institution,

1. Both communities are considered to be Nambūdiri outcastes. Whether the institutions of Cākkyār-kūttu and Pāṭhakam owed their existence to these respective communities, or whether they later created the respective institutions associated with them is a matter not free from doubt. They are however mutually inseparable.



which naturally produced in course of time different schools of thought, each having its own group of writers to help them with the materials they were in need of.

The very nature of the institutions and their requirements rendered the literature that sprang out of it highly varied in details but having a uniformity in general outline. The writers in the early stage were anonymous, which led to confusion as to the identity of the authors. Different readings, repetitions, borrowings are therefore a common feature of this branch of literature; and the most essential and interesting part of it is still in the custody of the professionals and is a sealed book of outsiders. What has been published so far is only the material which has been supplied to the professionals by eminent writers at various stages.

Among this class of writers Punam is decidedly the outstanding figure.

#### Punam.

1.

Two slōkas make Punam a contemporary of one Mānavikraman, a Zamorin of Calicut, and the well-known but conceited scholar poet Uddanda Śāstrikaḷ of Tanjore. The two are connected with the famous literary academy, founded by one of the Zamorins. It consisted of 18½ select poets

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1. a. The Slōka that begins with :-

Tāriltānvikatākṣāncala.

This is ascribed to Punam.

b. The Slōka that begins with :-

Adhikēraḷamagraḡirah

This is ascribed to Uddandaṇ.



and scholars of the period. The eighteen were sanskrit poets, and the appellation of 'half-poet' was given to the Malayalam poet Punam. The tradition gives us an idea of the dominant influence of Sanskrit in the Court of the Zamorins in those days; but it does only scant justice to the Malayalam poet, whose reputation has survived till to-day, while a good many of his so-called superior contemporaries have been clean forgotten.

Who exactly was the Zamorin who presided over  
1.  
this literary academy is not easy to determine, as the particulars available are confusing. In one of the alōkas referred to, the Zamorin is praised for his valour and is described as the 'Sun that dispels the darkness of his enemies;' and it is believed that this epithet refers to a  
X. Zamorin's  
Saktan Zamorin. There are three Saktans/<sup>Zamorin's</sup> known to Kērala history. The first was the founder of the dynasty of Zamorins who extended the bounds of his small Kingdom<sup>of</sup> Pōlanād by conquering the neighbouring principalities Pōlanād, Kōzhi<sup>K</sup> etc. in the 10th Century <sup>A.D.</sup> ~~(1000-1000 A.D.)~~. The  
2.  
other lived in the 15th century A.D. and conquered Cochin in 1498 A.D. The third belongs to the 17th century A.D. ~~(1600-1600 A.D.)~~ and is believed to be the author of Mānavēda-campu. As the

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1. Literary and philosophical discussions used to be conducted under the auspices of this academy and a prize called 'Pattattānam' was awarded as prize to the scholar who vanquished other scholars in the discourse. The story is that Uddandan carried away this prize for 12 consecutive years.

X. Literally means strong man.

2. Who received Vasco de Gama and resisted the Portuguese interference on the West Coast ~~(for nearly a century)~~



name of the third is Mānavedan he may be eliminated from the list as the Slōka under reference mentioned a Mānavikraman.<sup>1.</sup> The probabilities are that Punam belonged to the Durbar of the 2nd Saktan (1498-1504). His reference to people wearing<sup>2.</sup> parangi caps among the crowd that assembled to witness the coronation of Rāma supports this view.

The authorship of Campus, as I have already observed, is very often a thorny question, owing to the fact that this style was handled for professional purposes by Cākkyārs who were often guilty of addition and subtraction and plagiarisms.<sup>3.</sup> An incredibly large number of campus which form the majority of this class of literature are assigned to Punam. He is indisputable the author of Rāmāyana Campus, in which the whole story has been divided into a number of episodes.<sup>3.</sup> Sita Swayamvaram is the most typical.

Descriptions of marriages are the most suitable themes for the poets and cākkyārs to introduce contemporary life, and we find all sorts of fantastic imageries and anachronisms in them.

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1. Mr. R. Nārāyaṇa Panikkar's assumption that Mānavikraman is the only family name of the Zamorins is not correct. They are known by three distinct names. 'Mānavikraman', 'Mānavedan', and 'Sri vīrarāyan'. (Bhasasāhitya caritram p. 358. vol. 1.)

2. Parangi corrupted from Hindustani Feringhi, itself a corruption from 'Franks', is the name by which the Portuguese and their descendants are known in Malabar.

3. Eleven have been published so far. These do not include the events described in the third to sixth Kānda of Rāmāyana.



His method shows that he was under the influence of Sanskrit kāvya that converted the epic solemnity of a purāṇic marriage hall into the light-hearted atmosphere of a comedy theatre. It opens with the description of the arrival of the various sovereigns with all their paraphernalia; and the readers are then led to that part of the spacious hall where people at large congregate to witness the ceremony. The Nambūdiris, especially the younger generation, the <sup>1.</sup> magicians, the astrologers and the physicians of Malabar find a place there. The appearance of the bride, whose beauty is treated to a detailed description, follows as the next item. One of her senior maids of honour introduces to her the various Rāja who have assembled there to seek her hand. The poet is more concerned with their unedifying <sup>2.</sup> behaviour, in which they unconsciously find themselves, in order to appear at their best when Sīta approaches them. The situation created by the attempt of various princes to break the celebrated bow of Śiva and the failure of the many in the ordeal claims his attention next. He concludes by giving us a picture of the tumult and chaos that ensued when Rāma broke the bow and established his right to the fair hand of Sīta, as the event excited the jealousy of some princes, who even challenged him to a fight.

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1. The poet is particularly severe on them.

2. One Rāja grew so desperate that he had to drink the juice of a tender coconut to be at ease. How the tender coconut, which is available only in Malabar happened to be at Janakas's court, is a matter for historical investigation.



Neither in Vālmiki's work nor <sup>1. in</sup> Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa does the episode take a turn like the one which the Campu writer has given it. He has no doubt, made it more dramatic, but at the same time deprived it of its grandeur and majesty.

His description of the gathering at the marriage durbar gives us the impression that it is not a solemn occasion but a sporting event.

The poet's wonderful command of language and his power of caricature, relieved now and then by his imaginative flights and poetic fancies, however, entertain the reader throughout the work, which is never dull. In fact these features form the chief merit of campu, in which one finds scarcely any profound thought or ~~eloquent~~ lofty sentiment ~~expression~~.

#### Maṣamangalam.

#### Maṣadha campu.

Next in importance, though in quality equal to Punam <sup>2.</sup> if not superior, is Maṣamangalam, also a Mambūdiri. <sup>3.</sup> His name also is linked with one of the Zamorins, by name Mānevēdan (1563 A.D.), who is believed to be the author of the famous <sup>4.</sup> campu in Sanskrit that is named after him. The internal

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1. In Vālmiki's poem there is only the mention by Janaka that many princes failed to break the bow before Rāma appeared and thl. In Vālmiki's poem there is only the Sīta's hand to them. Many princes failed to break the bow b (Griffiths Translation)

2. The house name. Mambūdiris are generally known by their house (Illom) names in Malabar.

3. The tradition is that he belonged to that section among the who have no right to study Vedas, but can perform 'Sandhyas' reciting gāyatri.

4. History of Malayālam language and literature by P. Gōvind Pillay. Page 246, 247.



1.  
evidence available on his commentary on muhūrtapadavi indicates that he belongs to a much earlier period (1449 A.D.) The confusion is due to the fact that the literary academy started by one of the Zamorins was continued by his successors, and there was a series of scholars and poets admitted to it by different Zamorins at different times. 2.  
His reference to Valayādhīswari in his Naisadha campu however, makes us hesitate to ignore the theory associating him with a Zamorin. The historical fact that the Rāja of Cochin and the Zamorin were at the period not on friendly terms and the assumption that a subject of the former would not think of rallying himself to the banner of the latter on that account, are not sufficiently valid arguments against the theory. A careful study of the history of Kēraḷa will convince us that the rivalries between royal families never affected their subjects except the fighting classes, and the Nambūdiris as priests could have access to the various palaces irrespective of the question of their domicile. Instances of their service as peace-makers between the fighting Rājas were also

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1. A work on Astrology by his Guru, Paramēswaranpōrri (Chengamur).

2. Scholars are of opinion that this refers to the deity of Ūrakam temple near Peruvanam, Cochin State. Valayan means a circle or bangle, but the famous temple of the Zamorins is also called Tīruvalayanād temple, in which the word 'Valayan' occurs in an unmistakable form.



1. not uncommon. Besides, we do not hear of a literary academy in Cochin at the time, and it is not unlikely that the poet who had no politics of his own sought connection with an institution that gave him due recognition. The expression 'Valayādhīswari', which could apply to the Zamorin's family deity as well as his own, might also be taken as an instance of his ingenuity. One thing is certain. He cannot be separated far from Punam, whose tradition he maintains with all the liveliness of a personal contact, although in the matter of execution he very often excels his model.

His well-known Malayālam work is Naisadha Campu. The story of Nala and Damayanti is its theme. It is divided into two parts, the first part ending with the marriage of the hero and the heroine. Following the method of Campu writers, the subject is introduced as being addressed to a third person called Vōṣan (a friend) and straightway readers are given an elaborate

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1. Foreign travellers like Varthema bear testimony to this fact. History of Kerala, Part II. Page 391 by K.P. Padmanabha Menon.

2. He is considered to be the author of several works in Sanskrit, particularly in rituals and astrology, such as Tsaucaṁ, and Kāladīpam etc. His interest in rituals is supposed to be the outcome of the stigma attached to his clan, which prevents him from learning Veda in Malabar and consequently drove him to the Eastern districts, when he returned as an authority on the subject. People who once turned him out of a Yaga Hall had to instal his memory there later by placing a stool in front of the place of ceremony and mentioning his name. The custom is followed even at the present day. Some ascribe him 'Candrōtsavam', a Maniprāvāla Kāvya, with the life of a prostitute as its theme. It is cleverly written, but the subject matter is unacceptably obscene and is entirely devoid of dignity which is Maṣamangalam's chief feature.



description of the beauty and prosperity that reigned in Nalā's palace. With the interview between the king and the hamsa the story takes a really romantic turn, and our poet lingers long over it. He is no doubt a master in the field of romantic love, and his delineation of it is superb and dignified. He makes a clear distinction between love and lust, and it must be said to his credit that where other poets have descended to obscenity he has risen to a height that never offends one's moral sense. The letter which Damayanti addresses to her lover, of whom she has only heard, is a masterpiece of sustained emotion,<sup>1.</sup> that speaks volumes for the wide culture and high sense of decency of which it is the offspring. Before this the author has already given a life-like picture of the heroine developing as a child of beauty to be the paragon of loveliness and virtue. As usual the marriage Hall is subjected to a detailed description. His own community comes in for a good deal of criticism therein. When Damayanti appears with the 'Garland of Selection',<sup>2.</sup> the poet attempts another description of her

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The sense of the first sloka may be freely rendered thus:-

1. If I address you as Vallabha(husband), and claim your attention the term does not sound proper.  
 If I say Oh Rājā ! I am only exercising a right which all (your subjects) have in common.  
 It is appropriate if I address you as 'my life' but in that I am only repeating like a parrot what a number of other women have said before.  
 I am thus in a terrible uncertainty as to how I should begin my message to you.
2. Swayamvaramāla.



personal charms which exceeded the expectation of the princes assembled and drove them to forget their dignity and status. In fact the poet is never tired of describing his heroine.

After giving the readers of a fine picture of the days of enjoyment that followed the marriage of Hala and Damayanti, the poet takes them to the second part of the story, which is full of pathos. After a game of dice Hala lost his Kingdom and went into exile with his beloved Queen. While in the forest his sorrow overpowered his reason and he left her helpless and began wandering about till he reached the Court of Rtuparna (Oudh). Situations like Hala's leaving his Kingdom and Damayanti's lamentations after her husband had left her in the forest give plenty of scope for a talented poet and have been handled by Maṣamangalam in a manner that has been equalled only by Unṁāyi vāriyar (two centuries later) in his famous Kathakali work on the same theme! but he has never been surpassed before or after. As a poet, I am inclined to rank him as superior to Punam, who however excels him in satirical powers. Both are decidedly the two shining stars in the Campu horizon, which has brought within its fold a good number of adherents. A vast majority of them are clever imitators, and it is not easy to distinguish their contributions from one another, owing to the

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1. According to some there are nearly two hundred works in this branch only one fourth of the number has been published so far.



uniformity in style, diction and method.

Another writer who deserves notice in this connection is the author of Bhārata Campu, which follows the plan of Punam in his works on the Rāmāyaṇam. The most popular of this series, is Pāncālīswayamvaram in which the features of Punam's Sīta Swayamvaram and Mañamangalam's Damayanti Swayamvaram have been faithfully reproduced. I have even heard of some Cākkyāra quoting from Rāmāyaṇa Campu and Naisadha Campu when performing Pāncālī Swayamvaram. To me the whole series of Bhārata campu appears like a clever imitation of Punam's work punctuated by occasional brilliant flights here and there.

Another work ascribed to the author of Bh:campu, who is believed to be by name Nārāyaṇan, is Nārāyaṇīyam, which deals with the legend about the Tripunittura temple. The story has a striking resemblance to the Santānagōpalam episode of the Bhāgavatam, together with an additional story of the gift of an image of Viṣṇu presented by the god himself which Arjuna instals at the above place. It is strange that the author does not

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1. 10 pieces from this have been published in the pages of "Kavanōdayam".

2. Some think it is the famous Meppattur whose Subhadrāharana Campu is well-known. One who is acquainted with the general level of Meppattur's productions, which are in pure Sanskrit, will reject this suggestion.



refer this episode to the Bhāgavatam, in spite of the obvious similarity between both. The identity of the author is<sup>1.</sup> rendered uncertain by a reference in another Campu entitled Tenkailāsanathōdayam, in which it is stated that the author of that work had already composed the Nārāyaṇīyam and Cellūrnathōdayam, and that his name was Nīlakanṭhan. This Nīlakanṭhan is often identified with another of the same name who was a contemporary of Meṭṭattur and was believed to be one of the gurus of Eṇṭuttaccan. A discussion of his identity and notices of his works will be more appropriate in the Chapter on Eṇṭuttaccan's contemporaries; and we propose to conclude our comments on the Campu with an estimate of the nature of their contributions to the development of Malayālam Literature.

As I have already observed, the Campu has been the product of Sanskritic influence; and in general outline and scope it is a faithful reproduction of the original. But in the matter of detail two elements have been introduced, the element of satire, and a further development of the poetic prose. The former was necessitated by the institution of Cākkyār Kūttu, which inspired this sort of literature and in which satirical comments on contemporary events and personalities formed the dominant feature. This aspect also led the writers to look upon their themes, though taken from Rāmāyaṇa or Mahābhārata, as distinct entities and not as parts of a larger scheme of stories. For instance, Bhōja Campu in Sanskrit is also divided into six Kāṇḍas, following the plan

1. The stanza that begins with the line -  
"Vidyāvallabha Nīlakanṭha sukave.



of Vālmīki, while Rāmāyana Campu in Malayālam includes ten separate episodes discovered so far and several more to be discovered hereafter. It will be thus seen that the originality and the poetic talents which Campu writers exhibit, have been due to the novel feature introduced in its composition. This is the first time that writers in Malayālam took liberty with classical themes, which had been hitherto narrated in a methodical way that did not seriously interfere with their time-honoured trend. The deviations, in which anachronisms abound and which sometimes offend the orthodox sense of propriety, however, brought literature within the reach of people whose life it sometimes reflected. In other words, the society of Malabar and its institutions began to influence the literature and the shape it was to assume. This is no doubt a sign of growth. If the literature of a country is not inspired by the life of the people, for whose edification and enjoyment it is intended, it does not last long for lack of nourishment and vitality, which can be supplied only by the ever growing sensations and experiences which life provides. The history of classical literature abundantly illustrates this fact. The moment they lost touch with the people and the factors that regulated their progress and outlook, they ceased to grow, and remained as treasures to which only a privileged few could have access.

The life of adventure and romance which Nambūdiris and Nayar aristocrats led in those days had so much of vitality and energy in it that these features found



their way into all the mental and physical activities of the period. Literature could not escape them, for the Nāyars and Nambūdiris themselves were its patrons. Insipid narration of Purāṇic stories never appealed to them. They wanted to have their own life reflected in poetry, and we have already seen that the institution of the Kuttu and the Campu or Prabhandham Literature was a direct offspring of this Universal desire. What Campu writers have started we find Kunعان Nambiyār taking up again three centuries later, giving it a purely Malayāḷam garb in his Tullals. With him social satire reached its highest water-mark.

#### Popular Ballads.

Cākkyār Kūttu and Campu reached only a few classes of the Kēraḷa Society, owing to various restrictions and limitations involved in the institution. The temple was their stage, and only those who possessed the right of entry into it could enjoy the performance. The lower orders below the Nāyars continued the tradition of ballads and folk-songs, which remained their chief source of entertainment. Exploits and romances of heroes constitute the main theme of these ballads. Two families of N. Malabar



1. Puttur and Taccōli bulk large in them. On the other hand, 2. in South Malabar the Cāvēr Paṇikkar's fight at the 3. Māmāṅkam formed the chief source of inspiration. Men and women working in the fields or engaged in other occupations sang and enjoyed these songs, which relieved the monotony of their work and made them forget their weariness. The authors of these songs preferred to be anonymous. They no doubt sprang from the more cultured of the masses, although possibly their irresistible appeal might have attracted some budding poet from the higher classes too. In any case the romantic mould in which they are cast and the moving narration which forms their uniform feature have a simple charm all their own, so that one feels the throb of popular emotions in every line of them.

1. To this belong (a) Ārōmalocēvakar the Īṣava hero who fought the historic Ankem fight (duel) for seniority between two brothers of a family at Vattattunēd and died as a result of foul play on the part of his adversary. The song throws considerable light on the polity and society of Kēraḷa when popular assemblies through their executives conducted the administration. It is a thrilling story of revenge and intrigue: (b) Unyārca, the sister of the above. Her encounter with a band of Jōṇakas who were defeated by her single-handed is narrated in another noted ballad.

2. This family is famous for the Nāyar heroes, Odēnan, Candu and Kōman.

The exploits of Odēnan are innumerable. The present writer's collection of Songs concerning his adventures comprises fifty: Mr. McQueen's collection consists of thrice that number. The other two were his nephews.

3. The author's collection of these songs contain a dozen songs, of which those relating to Vattōli Kandar Menon and Candunni are the most thrilling.



They are absolutely free from foreign literary influence except for some stray words due to contact of outsiders for diplomatic or commercial purposes. Their form and subject matter are thoroughly indigenous. It is a pity that the literary giants of Malabar never felt their appeal or made use of the materials that abound in them in their ventures till comparatively recent times.

### Nirānam Poets.

Though according to accepted chronology the poets that are known by the above general appellation and Ceruśśeri belong to the age prior to the period in which Campu literature flourished. I have reserved a review of their works to the last section of this chapter, for the reason that they faithfully represent various stages in the genuine development of native Malayālam literature, in which Campu came in as an interlude, and that Ezuttaccan was the true heir and promoter of the tradition which they cultivated and perpetuated through their memorable works. The arrangement will also give a more comprehensive idea of the continuity of the literary development which I have attempted to sketch in the foregoing pages.

Nirānam is a place in Tiruvalla (Central Travancore) where the plot of ground known as "Kannāśśan parambu", like the Tuñjun Parambu of <sup>British</sup> Malabar, preserves the tradition about these Nirānam poets. Their works are known by the common name Kannāśśan Pāttus, while the metre they used in common



1. is called Nirāṇa-vṛttam. Fortunately, these terms are based upon something more substantial than legends. The author of Kaṇṇaśśan Rāmāyaṇam at the end of Uttararāmāyaṇam gives us a genealogy of his family that existed at Nirāṇam. The name of one 'Karunēśan' is mentioned as the founder of the family. He is called 'Ubhayakaviśwaran', a poet in two languages, in Malayālam and probably in Sanskrit and referred to as having renounced the world having lived a saintly life for a long time. His family consisted of two sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom was the mother of Rāman, the author of the Rāmāyaṇam, who was born after the demise of his grandfather Karunēśan. The name of the founder was given to the family, whose members added the qualification Kaṇṇaśśan to their names, and were called Kaṇṇaśśa Paṇikkars, while their works known as Kaṇṇaśśan Pāttus. So far these data are reliable, and there is also no doubt about the name of the poet who composed the Rāmāyaṇam. The names of his uncles have not been mentioned. But we know from Kaṇṇaśśa Gītā and Kaṇṇaśśa Bhāratam that they were written by Mādhavan and Sankaran respectively. Whether these two were the uncles referred to by Rāman in his work is a matter left to

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1. Nirāṇam is the place name and Kaṇṇaśśan is undoubtedly the name or title of a person.

2. ~~There are~~ In the last three stanzas.

3. Of which the name Kaṇṇaśśan is supposed to be a contraction. The word can also be derived from Kaṇṇan and Accan. It is also probable that this Malayālam name was Sanskritised into Karunēśan, as has been done with many place names of Malabar.

4. His name is Rāman.



conjecture. The mention of the two uncles who were on the testimony of the nephew great scholars also suggest such a probability. The metre they all use in common also lends support to this view. We can only leave it at that for the time being.

If Mādhavan the author of Bhagavadgītā is taken  
1.  
to be the uncle of Rāman, his production must be the earliest of Nirāṇam works. The Gītā of Mādhavan is no doubt a remarkable work in many respects. In it an attempt  
2.  
has been made by the author not to give a literal translation of the original, which contains 700 stanzas, while the Malayālam version has only 328, but an excellent clear  
3.  
exposition of the doctrines of the Gītā with original views in further elucidation thereof. This fact by itself speaks eloquently for the author's confidence in his knowledge of the subject he is handling and the high position he held among religious scholars of the day; else he would not have dared to take any liberty with a work of the magnitude and importance of the Gītā, which is considered to be the

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1. But there is one difficulty that stands in the way of this inference. In all the other works of the group the deity of Nirāṇam temple is invoked, while in Gita it is the Mother of Malayinkīḥ temple near Trivandrum that is mentioned. As an explanation of this fact it has been suggested that the family of these poets was believed to be related through its founder to the Porris of Nirāṇam, who had properties and lands in Malayinkīḥ; this however needs closer investigation.

2. The author himself admits (8 in Ch:42) that he has given only a summary.

3. 6 in Ch:II 6 in Ch: III 6 in Ch:VII.



quintessence of Hindu philosophic thought. Some of his verses<sup>1.</sup> are based upon the commentary of Sankara. In many places exact reproductions are also to be found. The work is the outcome of mature reflection on the philosophy of the Gītā, which only a close and prolonged study of it could give, and the style in which it is written is not the style of an ordinary poet who finds difficulty in giving proper expressions in his mother tongue to the Sanskrit words, but is that of a master who has words at his command and who can use them with discretion so as to have the desired effect in expounding a highly difficult and intricate subject. Nor is the language in which it is written insufficiently developed, or at a stage in which its literary usages and borrowings are not regularised. It looks like the fruit of a young plant flourishing on firm roots. Technical philosophical terms in Sanskrit are freely used, but only with Malayāḷam suffixes. Some of them are introduced in<sup>2.</sup> the same form and others in tadbhava form,<sup>3.</sup> in which traces of Tamil influence linger. But these are few and far between, and the linguistic forms in general bear testimony to a deep rooted indigenous tradition which is steadily gaining ground. This consideration naturally gives us a clue as to its age. We have as a landmark the Līlātilakam,

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1. 4 in Ch.VII, 5 in Ch.IX, 2 in Ch.XV etc.

2. Udbhavam, Adaitam.

3. Such as Darśana for Darśana, Nāna for Jñāna.



in which foreign borrowings, particularly of a Sanskritic character, were subjected to a searching analysis with a view to bring them under certain definite rules and reject those that did not conform to the genius of the language.

Excessive use of Sanskritic forms and suffixes, which the *Līlātilakam* condemns does not find a place in *K. Gītā*, and none of its lines has been quoted as examples of *Pāṭṭus* in *Līlātilakam*. Either the work was not known to the author of *Līlātilakam*, or the latter preceded it. In any case both from a linguistic and literary point of view *Mādhavan's Gītā* is an outstanding production of the language, not equalled either before and after. There were several attempts to render the *Gītā* into Malayālam after him,<sup>1.</sup> but no instance of an earlier venture is known.

#### Sankara Panikkar.

It is generally supposed that Sankara Panikkar is one of the uncles referred to by Rāma Panikkar in his work. The work *Bharata Mala*, which is also written in *Niranamvṛttam*, certainly belongs to this school of poetry; and at the end of it the poet has himself mentioned his name as Sankaran.<sup>2.</sup> *Bhāratamāla* has not been published in

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1. It seems to be the first and pioneer attempt in the languages of S.India.

2. (a) *Mahābhārata Katha Sankaran ampoṭu*

(b) There are a number of Sankarans in the literary hierarchy of Kēraḷa. Sankara Kavi of Uddandan's time, the Guru of Kottarakkara Tampurān, the great Kathakali author, the author of *Naisadhe Campu*, etc.



full, and it is not easy to determine the quality of his work without seeing the whole of it. The portions of Bhārata Māla published so far only show that the author was a close student of the Kannassan School of poetry and that he has endeavoured to attain to its general level. The creative genius of a first-rate poet which is manifest in K.Gītā and K.Rāmāyaṇam is however not so pronounced in Bhārata Māla. The most outstanding member of the group is decidedly the author of Rāmāyaṇam etc, whose name, as already noted, is Rāma Panikkar. Both in quality and quantity he is unrivalled by any in his age. In quality the author of Gītā, it must be observed, presents <sup>1.</sup> equality the author of quantity only Eṣuttaccan is his equal. <sup>1.</sup> His equal claims, while in

The author of K.Rāmāyaṇam has considerably helped speculation on the subject of mentioning his name at the end of his Uttara Rāmāyaṇam, to which reference has already been made. His description of his family is not so definite. <sup>2.</sup> Critics are divided in their views regarding the founder, Karuṇēsan mentioned by him, whose scholarship and poetical

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1. The theme of Bhagavadgītā is more philosophic than poetic. His original touches here and there give us a glimpse of his genius, which seems to have felt the theme a handicap for the true expression of his poetic gifts..

2. Mr.Ullur S.Paramēswara Iyer(vide the introduction to his edition of K.Bhagavadgītā)thinks that the founder and the author of the Gita are one and the same person. While Mr.Attur Kṛṣṇa Piṣhārōṭi(in the introduction to Līlātilakam)expresses the view they are different and that Kannassan(Karuṇēsan) is the founder of the family and one of his sons is the author of the Gītā.



talents in two languages are however beyond question.

Karunēśan's sons are not referred to as poets, but only as scholars. <sup>1.</sup> The doubt whether Karunēśan is a personal name or a title confuses the issue further. Rāma Panikkar mentions the name of the founder with great reverence, and he also alludes to his ascetic life. Karunēśan the author of Bh:Gīta, whose theme no doubt suits admirably a man of his character and attainments, Rāma<sup>1</sup>would have taken care to draw attention to that also. His silence on that point is significant, and Karunēśan's authorship of the Gīta cannot be established on solid grounds. To me he represents the traditional scholastic ascetism of Kēraḷa founded by Sankara, and occupies a position similar to that of Eṣuttaccan's brother a century later. Such men sought to mould and inspire the life of the people with whom they came into contact as teachers and remained as fountain-heads of vast knowledge, which was imparted free to all who sought it. Poetry in those days formed a part of the equipment of a scholar and a Saint, and poet-scholars and poet-saints were more common then than in modern times, when poets do not necessarily practise the doctrines they preach. Speculations so far have been directed towards assigning to the founder one work, particularly <sup>the</sup> Gīta, out of the various productions that exist in the name of this school. Rāma Panikkar's list contains the names of four poets, while the works so far reveal unmistakably only the names of three. In

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1. The term used is Vidyādhīpar - Masters of Vidya - which can be taken to mean Vidwans (Scholars) in modern phraseology.



1.  
the circumstances the uncertainty about one which is expressed by the renowned Professor Nantyar Vīṭil K. Paramēswaran Pillai M.A. is a real one till more facts are available on the subject. If Karuṇēsan, as I have suggested, is taken as founder of the family and also of the school 2. which regarded him as Kūtaṣṭha and the prime source of inspiration, and not as an author, the difficulty is partially solved, and the question can only be left at that until we possess more authentic information.

I have already indicated that Līlātilakam does not say anything about the Kaṇṇaśśan Pāṭṭus, which bear distinctive characteristics of their own and mark a definite stage in the development of the malayāḷam language; and its author could have hardly omitted to mention them if they were known to him or existed in his day. There is a reason to think that Rāma Paṇikkar had seen the definition of Pāṭṭus in that work, as he generally conforms to the rules enunciated therein, particularly the Yaduka. 3. The author of Kēraḷa Sāhitya caritram 4. says that a manuscript of Kaṇṇaśśa Rāmāyaṇam copied

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1. Page 4 of his Introduction to his edition of Kannassa Gita.
  2. The original founder.
  3. The system of shyme as represented by the Dvitiyaprasam of the Kaṇṇaśśan school.
  4. Page 281 - Vol.I. of the work.



in 702 M.E. (1528 A.D.) was in his possession; and Mr. Govinda Pillay speaks of another copy of the same work dated 614 M.E. (1440 A.D.), which Mr. R.N. Panikkar has seen. These facts proclaim that the work existed before that date. There is also the testimony of the transcriber of the latter that the copy was prepared with Rama Panikkar's permission; whether he refers to the author, or to a member of the Kannassan family, is not clear. If the first inference is correct, the author was alive at the time of its preparation. If the second alternative suggestion is to be accepted, Panikkar's date may be pushed back a generation earlier, leaving a reasonable margin of time for a work to become widely known<sup>1.</sup> and create a demand for its copies. I have not heard of any Mss. of Kannassan Pāṭṭus existing in the central or northern part of Kēraḷa. The fact that Eṣuttaccan's works, which commanded a wider popularity, superseded them a century later must be taken as a probable cause of their disappearance in other parts of Kēraḷa and of the restriction of their circulation to their place of origin or neighbouring localities. But there can be no doubt that Kannassan and his school must have dominated the literary field before Eṣuttaccan; his works have been available in Ms. form all over Kēraḷa.

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1. If the possessors of these Ms. copies of the K. Rāmāyaṇam had stated the places where the Mss. were originally kept, we should have had a better insight into the popularity of Kannassan's works, on which so far very little light has been thrown. The literary world knew little or nothing about it till Mr. Vargese Māpilla published it for the first time in 1895.



Certain passages in Eṣuttaccan's Adh:Rāmāyanam reminds us of Kaṇṇaśśan's influence, and we might well conclude that the poet-saint was familiar with his works. The stores that have gathered round the two personalities have a striking similarity. Tradition assigns both to the clan of oil-mongers among the Nāyars, and brings in a brāhman to bless the career of Kaṇṇaśśan. The authors of these stories forgot the genealogy (given by himself) of Kaṇṇaśśan, as they did in the case of Eṣuttaccan too - which was good enough to produce a poet of his standing and eminence. As usual, these legends betray a lack of historical sense. In this particular instance they have dared to make the two poets contemporaries, ignoring a century that lay between them. It is quite probable that the great guru of Tuṇṇjattu referred to in Adh:Rāmāyanam might have established contact with the well-known family of Kaṇṇaśśan, whose ideals resembled his own, and paid his respects to its founder by a personal visit. Once the contact was established, his brother, the poet-saint could very well be trusted to continue it, as he sincerely believed in such relationships.. It is quite likely that he paid courtesy visits to the place several times during his lifetime, leaving some traces of his association. The continuity of the connection might have led their followers years later to invent a story establishing their contact in the

1. This is the story. A brāhman who was witnessing a Kūttu performance threw the end of a betel leaf on a stone pillar, which made a mark on it. This attracted the attention of Kaṇṇaśśan, who was also present there. He followed the Brahman after the performance and requested him to bless him. The brahman did so with the gift of a plantain fruit which transformed the poor Kaṇṇaśśan into a great poet. Kaṇṇaśśan is however free from the imputation of illegitimacy, to which Eṣuttaccan was exposed, thanks for the generosity of the legend mongers.



form in which it is preserved in the legend. One thing is clear. Both Kannassan and Eṣuttaccan have one feature in common, and that is their unique personalities, by which they influenced and enriched Malayālam literature. Their works were stamped with the impress of their individuality and greatness, and the method and style which they chose according to their personal predilections were best suited to the genius of the language. Their knowledge of other languages, particularly Sanskrit and Tamil, they fully utilized in order, to infuse fresh vigour and vitality into their own language by giving it sufficient stamina to stand on its own legs, and they have remained ever since the two guiding milestones at different stages of its onward march. The precedent set by Kannassan inspired Eṣuttaccan to greater efforts in the same direction; and the later attempt was crowned with more abiding results, having had the benefit of the earlier one. In the execution of their mission and in the actual details of workmanship each is as different from the other as two individuals can be. But in their devotion towards their mother-tongue and their whole-hearted endeavour to enrich it through their epoch-making contributions they agree in fundamentals, and as pioneers they occupy distinct pedestals of their own.

In the total output also the two masters resemble each other. Rāma Panikkar's known works are, besides the one we have already noticed, Bhāratam, Bhāgavatam, and  
<sup>1.</sup>  
 Sāvitrīmahātmyam. These works have been published only in  
 1. Eṣuttaccan's important works are Adh: Rāmāyaṇam, and Bhāratam besides a good number of minor works.



parts, which invariably bear the stamp of his genius and personal note. The name of their author (Rāman) is mentioned in all of them, and their style and presentation have the unmistakable marks of his poetry. There is no need, therefore, to doubt their authenticity or indulge in any speculation on their authorship.

A perfect balance of thought and expression is the dominant feature of Kannāṣṣan's poetry. His words are properly weighed, and never wasted or extravagantly used. As occasion demands, the words come to him in appropriate combinations; and master of language as he is, he gives them proper places. In his rendering of Rāmāyaṇam and other works he never believed in a literal translation, but always took care to reproduce faithfully in his mother-tongue the ideas of the original. If the idea is obscure, he takes trouble to elucidating it, adding his own personal views. If the original picture is not sufficiently clear and life-like, Kannāṣṣan's<sup>1</sup> genius enriches its poetic beauty by original touches.

His eye for poetic beauty and sense of discretion give his presentation an entertaining flavour, and we enjoy it all the more as we enjoy a flower with its fragrance. This aspect of his personality sometimes makes him insert a line of his own and leave the original to take

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1. His description of Rāma's attempt to break the bow at Janaka's Court is, among others, a remarkable instance of this feature.



1. care of itself. Instances of such deviations, which are numerous, show the true genius of Kaṇṇaśśan, who by handling a theme similar to that of Vālmīki and taking the latter's work as the basis, produced an independent work in his own language, which occupies an eminent place in it as Vālmīki's poem in Sanskrit.

Besides, Kaṇṇaśśan's works reveal traces of the later Vaiṣṇavic revival in medieval times, when poets could not look upon Rāma as a mere epic hero, but only as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, the supreme deity of the Viśiṣṭadwaita school. In Kaṇṇaśśan's Rāmāyaṇam the dēvas who approach Viṣṇu to present their petition of sorrow preludes it with a stōtra which we do not find in Vālmīki. But Paṇikkar, a typical Malayāli, is not partial to Viṣṇu. He has a similar hymn in praise of Śiva ready for Viśvāmitra at the commencement of his vigorous penance to attain the position of a Brahmarṣi. Both the occasions are unique, and the stōtras which Vālmīki did not care to compose appear quite appropriate. We notice here the small beginnings of the Bhakti movement, which reached the height of its fervour under Eṣuttaccan's championship.

1. (a) Vālmīki in giving the strange story of the bow makes only a brief reference in one ślōka to Dakṣa's sacrifice, while Kaṇṇaśśan narrates the episode in all its details in 8 Stanzas. The story illustrates the importance of the mother goddess, in whom people of Malabar have immense faith, which might have induced the poet to describe it in full. (b) When Dasaratha and Janaka meet for the marriage of their children they recall the past history of the two royal families. Vālmīki takes 3 chapters to describe these, and it reads like a Grandmother's story; Kaṇṇaśśan dismisses it in one line.

2. An ascetic who is considered equal to Brahma the creator. His rival Vasīṣṭha, who through his spiritual powers disgraced him in a fight, also occupied the status of Brahmarṣi.



//  
Cerusseri.

The scene now shifts to the north of Malabar, which was ruled by the Rājas of Kōlattiri, the traditional title of the kings of Kōlattunāḍ<sup>1.</sup>, one of whom was the patron of the famous Mambūdiri poet familiarly known as Ceruṣṣeri. The latter is the author of the well-known classic Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu, which deals with the story of Kṛṣṇa, who attracted innumerable herdswomen by the sound of his magic flute. It is of course based upon the 10th chapter (Desamam) of Bhāgavatapurāṇa. But his indebtedness to that purāṇa is but nominal. As a work of art Ceruṣṣeri's work stands on its own merits. The well-known incidents of the story relating to the flute-player God are presented by Ceruṣṣeri in his own felicitous form. The cowherd boy and his amorous adventures with the charming maidens of Ambādi<sup>2.</sup> impress Ceruṣṣeri more as a poetic conception than a religious idea<sup>3.</sup>; and we find the whole work dominated by this outlook and its attendant features. He is attracted by the aesthetic aspect of Vaiṣṇavism, which no doubt received a fresh impetus at his hands and which in Malabar inspired the fine arts more than religious life. The author's treatment of Rāsa Kṛīḍa reads like an expert treatise on erotics, and is on a par with Jayadēva's Gīta Gōvindam without the self-

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1. That portion of <sup>BR</sup>Malabar which has S. Kanara as its boundary on the North and Kōṭṭayam on the South.

2. The village of the cowherd chief Nandagōpa, the foster father of the boy Kṛṣṇa..

3. He seems to have thought of the God only at the end of his work, which he concludes ~~with xxxxxxxx~~ in praise of Kṛṣṇa..



1. surrendering emotional fervour of the latter. In Ceruśśeri the poet suppresses the devotee, while in Jayadēva the two combine admirably. The dominant note in Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu does not seem to be the result of an accident, but the outcome of deliberate design. The poet occasionally remembers the popular attitude towards Kṛṣṇa, and reminds his readers of the divinity of his hero. But the next moment he reverts to the realm of poetry, with which he is primarily concerned.

Ceruśśeri is the house name of the author of Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu. His real name and personality are still shrouded in obscurity. His date also is equally uncertain. The literary assembly of the Zamorins does not seem to have owned him, as no trace of his connection with it has survived; whether the assembly was started since his days or whether he was deliberately

3. excluded from it, it is not possible to say with any degree of certainty. In any case, in view of the peculiar conditions of the Malabar polity it is unsafe to rely too much on such uncertain data. The internal evidence available in his work only testifies that he was connected with the court of the Kōlattiris and that his famous work was composed at the instance of one of them whose name was Udayavarman. The usual difficulty which the royal names

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1. It must also be noted that Ceruśśeri makes no mention of Rādha, who is the heroine of Jayadēva's work.

2. The attempt on the part of some scholars to identify him with Punam has been proved to be without any foundation.

3. History and tradition record that the territorial ambitions of the Zamorins since their assumption of the Māmānkam chair often brought them into conflict with Kōlattiri, and we find the latter at the beginning of the 16th. Cent. actively encouraging Portuguese captains in their pepper trade, while the Zamorins in those days were fighting them.

4. Kōlādhināthanudayavarman. Ājñayecaikayāl.



and titles of Malabar present faces us here also. Udayavarman is a common name which a number of Kōlattiris have borne, and the identification of the particular King who was the patron of Ceruṣṣeri is not solved thereby. Nor is the poet over-enthusiastic about his favourite deity, whom the poets of Malabar, in keeping with the tradition of India, invoke at the beginning of their works. He only seeks the blessings of the Lord of Pālā<sup>1.</sup>ṣi, who is basking in the moonshine of the smile of his consort, the goddess Indira.<sup>2.</sup> This leads us nowhere. The family deity of the Kōlattiri Rājas is Kalarivāḍukkal Bhagavati.<sup>3.</sup> The author of Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu is evidently no devotee of that goddess, which again is an unusual phenomenon. Generally the poets that are attached to a particular king are devoted to the family deity of that King, unless they have a deity of their own. In the case of Ceruṣṣeri his devotion is shared by neither. The poet has taken care not to leave any marks of his identity in his work except those of his patron, who is also not entirely released from obscurity by them.

The charge of obscurity that is associated with the person of the author does not however apply to his work, which has definite and pronounced characteristics claiming for him complete supremacy in the literary world of Malayāḷam after

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1. The sea of milk, which is the mythological abode of the God Viṣṇu.

2. The Goddess of wealth and prosperity.

3. Literally the Goddess that guards the entrance of the Kalarī, the school for military training.



the age of Kannassan and before that of Ezuttaccan. His classic, which is a unique production of its kind, is a household name all over Kēraḷa; and its popularity among the womenfolk is unprecedented. The usual attraction which the story of the divine cowherd boy has for people of Vaiṣṇavic faith is not the only reason for this immense popularity of Ceruṣṣeri's work. It is founded on the classic simplicity of his diction, the charming music of his poetry and his remarkable poetic sensibility. His vividly poetic description of the boyhood of Kṛṣṇa and his childish pranks, in which the herdswomen figured largely, set in an atmosphere of pure romance, which has always an irresistible charm for the human mind, is not the least important of its attractions.

#### Ceruṣṣeri's date.

Ceruṣṣeri is generally assigned to the 7th Cent.M.E. (15th Century A.D.).<sup>2.</sup> As I have already stated, no definite data are available to set against the traditional date of the poet. The language of the K.Pāṭṭu shows more flexibility and vigour than that of Kannassan, and as such can be taken to represent the next stage in the development of the Malayāḷam tongue. The style also is different. The

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1. Till recent years women of Malabar used to devote the month of Dhanu, the month of their Tiruvātira festival, for recitation of Kṛṣṇapāṭṭu, not as a religious duty but as a labour of love.  
2. Page 149-The History of Malayāḷam Literature by P.Govinda Pillai. Page 310-Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram by R.Nārāyaṇa Panikkar.



1.  
preponderance of archaic Malayālam words is another feature of this great work. The poet has no preference for Sanskrit words; his selection of them is confined to those that had become current in popular usage, and there is hardly any instance of the use of Sanskrit suffixes throughout the poem. He handles Sanskrit words in the same way as he would deal with Malayālam words. The concluding portion of the work, to which an appendix in the form of a stotra is added, marks him out as equally efficient in Sanskrit, in which he has a good command of the vocabulary. But he loves his mother-tongue more and is keen on proving its potentiality for literary purposes. The pen-pictures he draws with genuine Malayālam words are gems of the language, and the high literary beauty which he attains, is an invaluable asset to it. His individuality in this respect is equalled only by the freedom with which he handles his theme. Both in design and workmanship he is a master artist. His style and presentation reveal an ease and originality which could be only the fruit of the inherent strength and full-grown vitality of the language.

2.  
Like Kaṇṇaśśan and Eṣuttaccan later, Ceruśśerī's name also is associated with a metre called 'Gātha' or Pāṭṭu in Malayālam. It is one of the few Malayālam metres that are

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1. Such as naṇṇi = (thought); manpu = beauty.

2. The theory started by Kundūr Narāyana Menon to make this the name of the metre and not of the house of the poet is hardly tenable, though it is ingenious.

3. He uses a few other metres also, but 'Gātha' dominates his work.



capable of considerable variations in tune and rhythm. It can be recited in the ordinary way or sung and adapted to dance-music, having a rhythm of its own without serious changes in the sound values of letters used in their compositions. Its adaptability has made it a favourite of later poets, particularly of those who were the composers of Kaikottikalipattus<sup>1</sup>. With modern poets it has become a passion, as the facility and ease with which it can be composed are typical of the spirit of freedom that is surging all over the country. Its popularity is an indication of its antiquity. No poet who knows his vocation will take the trouble of writing a poem in a new metre which is not known to the people at large. Much less would he think of inventing a metre. What he generally does is to take a popular tune or metre and give it a literary tone and dignity and stamp it with his vigorous personality. There seems to be no doubt that Cerusseri also must have done likewise. His personal taste of course must have influenced his selection out of the various tunes used for ballads and folk-songs. The fact of its being used for a serious literary work gives it a distinction which inevitably gets mixed up with the name of its author who had already attained a reputation of his own. Later literary developments affected its popularity a bit and the people having lost touch with the adaptability of the Gatha even accused Cerusseri for having written a long poem in one

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1. The songs used for a kind of popular dance called Kai-Kottikalipatti (dance accompanied by clapping of hands).



monotonous metre. The blame should be laid at the door of the Sanskritists, who showed a preference for Sanskrit metres in their Malayālam works and neglected indigenous metrical devices, which could be mastered only by those who had a keen ear for music.

It is a mistake to regard Ceruṣṣeri as an isolated phenomenon of his age. Though we have not heard of a literary academy under the patronage of the Kōlattiris, great poets like Ceruṣṣeri are bound to radiate their influence over the society in which they live, and to produce some admirers. The examples of Kannaṣṣan and Eṣuttaccan suggest such a possibility. The publication of Bhāratagatha, which is wrongly ascribed to Ceruṣṣeri, points to a circle of imitators of Ceruṣṣeri's style. There must have been some notable contributions inspired by Ceruṣṣeri's work. Perhaps they are lurking in the corners of the huge Mss. libraries of Kōlattunāḍ and Kaḍattunāḍ without having a chance of enjoying the patronage of these princes owing to transfer of loyalties or some unforeseen political upheaval. The fountain of literary activity often records a continuous flow when once it springs up, till it spends itself in uncongenial environments. The ancient Payyanūr Paṭṭōla, which nobody has seen but of which the memory has survived many a change

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~~His outstanding achievement has led some to identify him with Kannaṣṣan of Gampala fame, who represents the Sanskrit tradition. But the suggestion is hardly warranted by the quality of their poetry. The only common ground between them is the community to which they belong.~~



derives from that part of Malabar, and the rise of a star like Ceruṣṣeri after several centuries is like sparks from a continuous current that had run underground for some reason or other. In the fields of folklore North Malabar has to its credit the most magnificent contributions, extending over several centuries and presenting a remarkable continuity of output. There is no apparent reason why in the realm of letters there should not have been a similar tradition.

#### Ceruṣṣeri's poetry.

The natural charm of Ceruṣṣeri's poetry lies in the familiarity with which he takes his readers into his confidence. There is no ambiguity in his expressions except where he attempts a double meaning or *Slēṣa*, and he is never obscure. When one goes on reading his work, even the archaic expressions present no difficulty. The reader gets the sense of the passage at the first reading. If he is musically inclined, he is tempted to recite the lines in various tunes to which they were adapted. Their music makes him linger over them for the mere love of it. The poet's imagination is a store-house of metaphors and implied similes, which come to him quite naturally, and which are rendered more spicy by his sense of humour that is typical of the community to which he belongs. His humour sometimes gives the impression that he is wanting in human sympathy. His description of Kucēla is a remarkable instance of this trait. As an embodiment of poverty and purity the mythical brahman excites sympathy verging on pathos; but his



figure, which looked like a skeleton wrapped in skin, is an  
<sup>1.</sup>  
 object of fun for our poet. When he describes the interview  
 between Subhadra and Arjuna, his humorous touches are really  
<sup>2.</sup>  
 entertaining.

Among his pen-pictures his descriptions of the  
 seasons deserve the foremost rank, He may be called the poet  
 of the seasons, which have drawn from him the most beautiful  
 imageries. The boy Kṛṣṇa's amours with Gōpīs in different  
 seasons give him ample scope for description of natural  
 scenes and seasons. In fact this part of the story has the  
<sup>3.</sup>  
 lion's share in his version of Kṛṣṇa's life. In South India  
 Malabar presents a magnificent variety of seasons with  
 pronounced characteristics. The commencement of the rainy  
 season witnesses terrific thunder, lightning, and storm.  
 But the season has no horrors for the poet, who is attracted only  
<sup>4.</sup>  
 by its beauties. He is not less enchanted by the summer and  
<sup>5.</sup>  
<sup>6.</sup>  
 the spring.

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1. Ceruṣṣeri makes the servants of Kṛṣṇa's Court laugh at his figure, which they describe from head to foot. His stomach is represented as so hollow as Pātālam. Kṛṣṇa Pāṭṭu. K. G. p. 277

2. Arjuna visits Dwaraka, Kṛṣṇa's abode, in the guise of an ascetic to woo Subhadra, Kṛṣṇa's sister, who is asked to look after his needs. When she offers him fruits, he is so completely absorbed in looking at her and enjoying her beauty that he eats the rind instead of the pulp. K. G., p. 296.

3. The book covers the whole life of Kṛṣṇa from his infancy to his attainment of heaven (Swargārōhaṇam). More than half of it is devoted to the description of Rāsa Kṛīda.

4. He compares the rain-clouds to a blue canopy spread over the country, with cranes that fly to their nest as its white draperies. K. G., p. 67-69.

5. K. G., p. 66-67

6. K. G., p. 70-72



As a poet who revelled in sensuous beauty and aimed at realistic presentation of its delicate sensations, Ceruśśeri stands unrivalled in malayālam poetry. Mañamangalam, whom we have already noticed, is another exponent of the Sṛṅgāra sentiment; but he stands on a pedestal of his own. His method of approach is more intellectual, as he recognises only the cultured few as his prospective readers. He therefore attempted a kind of classic dignity in his treatment, which as an intellectual achievement is superb. There is again the author of Chandrō<sup>1.</sup>śavam, who sees love at its lowest depths, and who is unable to distinguish it from lust. In his picture of love and its intricacies Ceruśśeri adopts the 'golden mean' which could be enjoyed by the literate and the illiterate without being the worse for it. The romantic flavour which his poetry breathes has a perennial charm, as it is like that of the best love-lyrics of other languages based on the common experience of mankind.

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1. The theme of this work is the life of a woman devoted to pleasure, which for her constituted the end and aim of life. The very nature of the theme suggests that it is an imaginary picture, as the society of Kēraḷa never encouraged a life of that kind.



Ezuttacean.

A Biographical Sketch.

Chapter II.



## Chapter II

### Introductory.

Great men like meteors appear in the horizon but seldom. But they do not leave it like them without making an impression. They come with a specific mission and a message which they fulfil and deliver to the lasting benefit of the mankind. Ēuttaccan the epic poet and philosopher Saint of Malabar belongs to this rare and distinguished galaxy of men whose life was one of service and sacrifice and who made the world better and wiser than they found it.

1.

Since the days of the Great Sankara the Advaitist philosopher Malabar had to wait for several centuries to welcome a similar outstanding personality who commanded universal admiration and reverence. In the case of Ēuttaccan his fame could not travel beyond the boundaries of the Malayālam speaking area as his works were chiefly in Malayālam. But in the esteem and regard which are associated with his name he is equalled only by Sankara. An admiring public raised him to the status

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1. Malabar claims him as one of its eminent sons and Kāladī-(K. Travancore) is considered to be his birth place.



1.  
 of a Gandharva who in his previous birth was an eye witness  
 to the Mahābhārata war fought between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas  
 at the field of Kurukṣētra. The goddess of learning was  
 believed to be at his service and even the miraculous power of  
 endowing the monkey with the gift of speech was regarded as one  
 of his assets that marked him out as a super-man. There was no  
 branch of human knowledge which his all comprehensive intellect  
 could not grasp. He was equally at home with the muse of poetry as  
 well as the dry details of history, or medical science. His services

1. This has reference to the following passages in Ezuttaccan's Mahābhārat  
 Bālāmatānatan vāḷumarinittu Kōlāhalattōtu vannitu bānavum ("after cutting  
 the tail of the elephant the arrow reached back with all its glory")  
 Bhagadatta's elephant threw Bhima up into the sky and turned its tusks  
 upwards to catch him falling. At this critical moment Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna  
 appeared on the scene. Arjuna immediately aimed an arrow at the  
 elephant, which cut not only its neck, but also Bhagadatta, and his bow  
 and the tail of the elephant. In the picture drawn by Ezuttaccan, the  
 tail of the elephant is an addition which is ascribed to his super-  
 natural knowledge as Gandharva to whose divine vision the fight in all  
 its detail was as clear as daylight. It may also be stated in this  
 connection that Ezuttaccan's description is more true to nature, as  
 elephants often lift their tails when they are infuriated.
2. x. Saraswati. The story is that an incomplete manuscript of Dēvi Māhātmyam  
 was given to Ezuttaccan to fill up the missing portion. Soon after that  
 he fell into a trance when the goddess Saraswati appeared and wrote  
 it out for him.
3. Among the innumerable legends that have sprung round the personality  
 of Ezuttaccan there is one about a monkey who was caught by the poet or  
 his way to the tank for his bath. He tied the monkey to a Kaṇṇīra tree  
 leaving a piece of butter in its right hand asking it to keep it till  
 he returned after his bath. It was during summer and the butter melted  
 soon owing to the extreme heat of the sun. When he returned Ezuttaccan  
 asked the monkey about the butter and he naturally could not explain  
 what happened to it but Ezuttaccan by a magic touch of his hand made  
 the monkey say that the butter melted. This story is often quoted as  
 evidence of Ezuttaccan's extraordinary power of transforming even the  
 dullest boy into a prodigy by his teaching.
4. Tradition ascribes the authorship of a work on 'Aṣṭātāṅga hrīdayam'  
 (Medical work) and a treatise on Kēraḷa history entitled 'Kēraḷa Nāṭakam'  
 to Ezuttaccan.



were very often requisitioned by the Kings and notable men of his age. The Rājā of Ambalapūṣa requested him to decipher a Telugu manuscript on Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam, and the Zamorin of Calicut sought his blessings to remove the gloom of despondency that possessed him and his kingdom at the time through the performance of a Sāktēya Pūja. Even as a baby in arms he seems to have had an intuitive knowledge of Vēdas and corrected the Brāhmins at Trikkantiyūr Temple, where they were chanting Vēdic hymns.

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. This will be dealt with in the Chapter on A.R.

. A ritual of Tāntric Worship in which 'Sakti' feminine aspect of primeval energy, is propitiated. It would appear that he predicted that the Zamorin's family would lose their ruling rights in the third generation after that. According to some it is Sūryanārāyaṇ who predicted the downfall of the Zamorins.

. This temple is about half a mile from the Tirur Railway Station (Ponani Taluq, S. Malabar) and is near Eṣuttaccan's home. The incident referred to is believed to have taken place when the boy Eṣuttaccan visited the temple with his Mother and he called out to the Brāhmins there - Kāṇu - (mistake). They grew uneasy about the infant prodigy and by way of curbing his intellectual power gave him some plantains which were subjected to the influence of black magic, to eat, and as a result thereof the boy lost his gift of speech. To counteract this, the story adds, Eṣuttaccan's father gave him toddy which was also subjected to the same influence, and the boy thereafter had his speech restored to him. Popular tradition believes that Eṣuttaccan was addicted to drink, and this incident is often regarded as a justification for that habit by his admirers who are unable to reconcile his greatness with a vice of the kind which by the way has no authentic evidence in its support.



Strange are the ways of men who are anxious to pay homage to their heroes, and it often happens in the case of great men that a regular network of fables and legends sometimes mutually contradictory, is woven round their hallowed name and personality. As the legacy of our fore-fathers whose esteem and regard for their poet-saint was by far greater than ours, we are unwilling to reject and accept them in toto. But the interests of research, in which truth is the guiding principle, demand that these stories should be subjected to critical analysis with a view to separate the chaff from the grain. Apart from this legendary story there is still the solid fact, which can be verified even at the present day that the monumental works which were presented to the world by the Great Bard of Kēraḷa, and which still remain the priceless possessions of the Malayāḷam language and literature, are looked upon with great reverence and devotion by our orthodox brethren. The practice which enjoins on the people the reading of Eṣuttaccan's Rāmāyaṇa every day as a matter of obligatory religious duty still lingers in the nooks and corners of Malabar, in spite of the temptations of critical thought. The Guru-Ma<sup>1</sup>tham at Chittur (Cochin State

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1. This is the place where Eṣuttaccan is believed to have attained 'Samādhi'. Dr. Burnell, who visited this place, has written an interesting account of this institution which is looked upon by the people of the locality with great reverence and enjoys the sanctity of a temple with daily Pūja.



the small shrine at Trikkantiyur<sup>1.</sup> built on the ruins of his house, one family at Āmakkāvu<sup>2.</sup> 10 miles N.E. of Guruvāyār, and another at Perumāngod (Chōḻiath House, S.Malabar)<sup>3.</sup> still cherish the memory of this great poet-saint. The living representative of the pedigree which is maintained by the Gurumaṭham performs the Srāddha ceremony of Eṣuttaccan on the Utram day in the month of Dhanu (the Malayālam month that begins from the 14th of December), and the celebration has become an annual function of the institution. The professional village teachers of S.Malabar claim direct descent from Eṣuttaccan and invoke<sup>4.</sup> his blessings on the 'Vidyārambham' day. It is not possible

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1. The sand from the compound where the house of Eṣuttaccan stood once is even now taken by the neighbours to be used when children are to be initiated in letters in the belief that they will learn quicker. It is a traditional custom in Malabar to practice the art of writing in the beginning on the sand with the first finger. Writing on the palm leaf manuscript is the second stage. In modern times paper has taken the place of the palm leaf.

2. This family according to tradition is that of Eṣuttaccan's wife. Whether Eṣuttaccan had a wife or not is still a disputed point.

3. The members of this family are well known 'Sāktēyas' and look upon Eṣuttaccan as their first guru who according to their family tradition settled down there in his second incarnation. There seems to be a confusion of identity in this story. Eṣuttaccan's first disciple was famous for his tāntric knowledge and practice. By second incarnation probably the second guru of the line is meant.

4. 'Vidyārambham' literally means the beginning of learning and is performed as a ritual on the day after 'Navami' during Dusserah Season.



to harmonise this bewildering mass of legends about Eṣuttaccan, which are often mutually contradictory but at the same time give the impression that a complex personality which defied analysis and wielded tremendous influence on contemporary life lurks in them. The name of Eṣuttaccan is even now a source of living inspiration to the people of Kēraḷa, and its magic effect still remains a mystery. He was a pioneer in more fields than one literature, philosophy, religion, and a form of t̃antric cult, and he seems to have founded a school of his own in each. His followers fall into two clear-cut divisions, one adhering to the method of teaching which was his contribution to the realm of education and the other practising the tantric art of which he was the guiding spirit.

In the field of literature he was the model for several centuries, and even now reigns supreme in all his glory. Other minor deities have come and gone, but the sun of Eṣuttaccan shines for all ages.

The study of such a complex personality that has become an integral part of the culture of Kēraḷa is no doubt an education by itself.

There is therefore, nothing surprising in the fact that when once the deification was accomplished popular imagination embellished the imagery by additional details in the shape of stories rendering the task of the future biographer more difficult. The monumental literary productions of Eṣuttaccan are always before the public as living



embodiments of his greatness, and their fancy seems to have run riot in their enthusiasm to honour their great poet, each generation adding its own quota to the general stock of stories. The bio-grapher is thus confronted with a rich legacy of legend which gives him enough material for reflection and discrimination. The vastness of the material <sup>also</sup> threatens to baffle him; but that is no excuse for giving up the attempt.

### Legendary account of Eṣuttaccan's Life.

Eṣuttaccan was born in a poor family called Tuñjattu at Trikkantīyūr, a mile away from the Tirur Railway Station (S.Malabar). As a child he seems to have exhibited uncommon intelligence, which tradition says, excited the jealousy of the local Nambūdiri Brāhmins, who in consequence bore ill will towards the talented boy and created difficulties in his way. Mr.F.W.Ellis writes as follows about this aspect of the poet's life.

1.

"The difficulties with which he had to trouble gave him an energy of character which it is probable he would not have possessed had his caste been without blemish. 2. The Brahmins

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1. Malabar Manual by Mr.William Logan (1887) Vol.1 Page 92-94.

2. Eṣuttaccan according to tradition belonged to Cakkāla Nāyar clan (Oil Mongers) one of the subdivisions of the Nāyar Community on this point the author of the Malabar Manual adds the following footnote:-

"Mr.Ellis supposed him to be the illegitimate son of a Brahmin woman, but there is nothing to support this, and on the contrary tradition says he was a Sūdra(Nāyar ?). Mr.Ellis may have confounded the tradition about the great Sankarācāryas with the tradition about him".

Both Messrs.Logan & Ellis have misquoted the tradition which makes Eṣuttaccan the son of a Nambūdiri born of a Nāyar woman.



envied his genius and learning and are said to have seduced him by the art of sorcery into the habit of inebriety wishing to overshadow the mental powers which they feared. The poet however, triumphed over his habits, though he could not abandon them, and in revenge against those whom he considered the cause of his debasement he opposed himself openly to the prejudice and intolerance of the Brahmins. The mode of vengeance he chose was the exaltation of the Malayālam tongue, declaring his intention to raise this inferior dialect of Tamil (?) to an equality with the sacred language of the Gods and Rishis, i.e. Sanskrit. In the prosecution of this purpose he enriched the Malayālam with the translations I have mentioned."

After receiving his early education in the traditional way he is believed to have travelled in the other parts of India and acquired a mastery of Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. He returned home after some years and settled down as a teacher, continuing his literary pursuits and giving free instructions to his disciples. His great works "Adhyātma  
1. Rāmāyaṇam" and "Mahābhārata" 2. were written in this period. His genius soon won recognition, and great literary men of the day like Meppattur and Bhattatiri 3. sought his friendship, which again

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1.-2 Vide the chapters 3 and 4 for further particulars about these works.

3. Author of Nārāyaṇīyam, a famous Sanskrit work. See below next page. He also hails from the same place where Eṣuttaccan was born.



1.  
gave rise to a good number of stories. The friendship was fruitful on either side. Bhattatiri is supposed to have been responsible for introducing Ezuttaccan to the Ambalapuzha Raja<sup>2.</sup> at whose instance he wrote Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇaṁ, and Āṣuvāncēri Tamprākkaḷ.<sup>3.</sup> Ezuttaccan's fame and character attracted disciples from various parts of the province; and ere long a new school in literature, art and philosophy, with Bhakti (devotion) as the cardinal principle came into being under his inspiring guidance. The system of village education introduced by him was accepted throughout N. Kēraḷa, and it lingers even now in some remote corners.<sup>4.</sup> He lived the life of a saint, which made his devotees look upon his works with an amount of reverence which no other work in Malayāḷam ever enjoyed either before

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1. One of these relates to the advice given by Ezuttaccan to Meppattur to write his "Nārāyaṇīyam" in Sanskrit, which is based on Bhāgavata Purāṇa describing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. It is in the nature of a devotional poem addressed to the Lord of Guruvāyūr temple (S. Malabar) whom he identifies with Lord Viṣṇu.

2. Ambalapuzha is in N. Travancore. The story is that this Raja asked Ezuttaccan to transcribe into Malayāḷam characters an Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa written in telugu script. When doing this our poet wrote his Kilipattu.

3. The famous Nambūdiri Priest, who held many titles conferred upon him by the then reigning Kings of Kēraḷa, whose coronations were consecrated by him.

The reference at the end of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa to Nētranārāyaṇa according to some critics, relates to Tamprākkaḷ.

4. The Poet had a daughter according to one account and according to another a niece.



or after. A visit from him was considered a rare honour by every Malabar household, and the palm leaf <sup>1.</sup> mss. of his works and other relics of his are still preserved as sacred souvenirs in various houses of Malabar. He seems to have spent his last days in <sup>2.</sup> Chittur (Cochin State) and attained "Samādhi" at the "Gurumatham" <sup>3.</sup> which still exists as his memorial. The name of Eṣuttaccan later on became a synonym for preceptor or guru, and the various saints who succeeded the founder as presidents of the Madham assumed that title. Four important names, Sūryanārāyaṇan, Karuṇākaran, Dēvaguru, and Gōpālan, are mentioned in the genealogy or Guruparampara of the institution.

His birth and family.

It is a pity that reliable accounts of Eṣuttaccan's parentage are not available and that people of Malabar who deified him did not think it worth while to write the biography of such an eminent personality. Had it not been for the material handed down to us by tradition, which by its very nature cannot be considered authentic, we should have been absolutely in the dark about his life or the various factors that went to its making. To begin with, we are confronted with a story relating to his birth which bristles with improbabilities

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1. A Nambūdiri family at Chamravattam not far from his birth place still preserves a palm leaf Mss. of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa which is believed to be in his own hand writing and have been presented to them by the author. An iron pencil supposed to have been presented by Eṣuttaccan is kept in the Cerukāla family (Nāyar) at Chowghat.

2 - 3. There is a difference of opinion as to the exact founder of the institution. The matter is discussed at length in the course of the chapter.



It opens with the arrival of a Nambūdiri Brahman who is on his way back home from Trivandrum after the Murajapam ceremony at a Nāyār house at Vettattunād one evening. He seeks shelter there for the night. He is given a bed in the portico of the house, but instead of sleeping he walks in the courtyard, occasionally looking at the stars.. A Nāyar virgin who happened to be awake at the time observes the restlessness of the guest through the window of her room and enquires the reason. He informs her that he is an astrologer and that he is sorry that a good "Muhūrtam" (auspicious hour) which if used for a union will lead to the birth of a great soul, is passing away. The innocent girl requests that the favour be conferred upon her, and the generous-minded Numbūdiri gives her his company for the night. Eṣuttacean is supposed to have been borne as a result of this union.

The fertile brain that invented this story has neither sense of time or proportion. He speaks of the 'Murajapam' that was instituted by Mārttāṇḍavarma, who was a contemporary of Kuncan Nambiyār, who lived at least a hundred years after Eṣuttacean. It does not stand to reason that the Brāhman astrologer who thought of an auspicious hour for a union and who was sorry that he could not reach his home in time could not find it out earlier with the help of his knowledge of astrology and make an honest attempt to be with his people at the so called

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1. A religious ceremony conducted by Brāhmanas lasting for 41 days. Started by Mārttāṇḍa Varma, the Great Ruler of Travancore who brought the whole province under his sway, as a means of expiation of the sins committed by him during his conquest.



auspicious hour and give them the benefit thereof; and the generosity that prompted him to present an extraordinary child to a stranger is incredible indeed. Even supposing that the Nāy<sup>r</sup> woman happened to be awake to notice his sleep-walking tendency, the question why he selected a Nāyer house for his night's rest when there were in the neighbourhood many houses of Brahmans who would have with pleasure and with profit too welcomed a guest of his attainments calls for an answer. Besides, what happened to the male members of the family at the time ? were there none ? It is the custom in Malabar joint-families that men guests generally sleep either in the spacious verandah of the house or in outhouses along with the male members of the family. The story gives us the picture of a family where there was only one or two women - probably mother and daughter - living, and where they were in the habit of receiving guests for the night. As against this we have it on the authority of Eṣuttaccan himself that he had an elder brother, by name Rāman, who was himself a scholar of repute with a good number of disciples around him. A woman of such a family that enjoyed a status which could be the envy of any household in Malabar hardly fits in as the heroine of the story of the kind. Anyone who went to Rāma's house would have regarded as an honour the personal acquaintance of the renowned scholar who presided over its destinies. It is no disgrace to be

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1. AgraJanmamasatām.....  
 .....Ulkurunninkal Vāṣka Rāmanā-mācāryanum -

"May my brother, by name Rāman, foremost among scholars, and my own guru reside in my heart (Bless me) along with other preceptors of mine.



poor. If on the other hand one born of poor parentage works his way up to a position of material prosperity and fame it is all the more creditable to him. Happily in the case of Eṣuttaccan it is the other way round. By the accident of his birth he inherited a tradition of scholarship of a very high order, which he by his literary achievements enriched and illuminated. The stigma of illegitimacy and obscurity sought to be created by an improbable story is evidently the result of an interested propaganda started by a section of the people who were jealous of his reputation and unique position in the literary field.

Some readers are inclined to read a personal note in the general observation which Eṣuttaccan makes in his Bhāratam in the course of Viduravākyaṃ. The justification for the suggestion is that the sentiment does not find a place in the original Mahābhārata; but there are so many instances of such original ideas in Eṣuttaccan's work that we cannot attach any undue significance to the passage in question. Further, even without a suggestion of the kind the observation is quite appropriate in the epic, in which the lives

of great men whose origin was not in keeping with the greatness they achieved later are described. As P.K.Nārāyaṇa Pillay pertinently remarks: 'The sooner the story is forgotten the better for the

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1. Tāpasanmāruṭēyūṃ Vāhini Māruṭēyūṃ.....

"It is unnecessary to enquire into the genesis of hermits, rivers, and great men".

2. Vyāsa and the Pāṇḍavas for instance.

3. His treatise on Eṣuttaccan, vide p.11.



fair name of the great poet Saint and the self-respect of the people of Malabar! It is interesting to note in this connection that similar stories are current about Kannassā Paṇikkar and Kuncean Nambiyār.<sup>2.</sup> Either Brāhman blessing or Brahman parentage was considered essential for the greatness of any man who did not belong to that sacred fraternity. It seems highly probable that there was subtle propaganda behind these stories.

### His name.

The term Ezuttaccan as has already been indicated, is derived from two words Ezuttu = Letters, and Accan = leader or father. It sounds more like a title than a name. The expression 'Tuñjattu' is no doubt the family name which is usual for the people of Malabar to prefix their personal name. Naturally therefore, scholars became intrested in knowing the real name of the poet, and various suggestion as a result of speculations on the subject have been put forward. Mr.P.Gōvinda Pillay suggests 'Sankaran' as a probability and 'Rāmānujan' as a possibility after the poets tour in the Eastern districts, where he is reported to have come into contact with the disciples of

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1. ~~The great Malayalam poet who lived about two centuries before Ezuttaccan~~ vide Chapter I for further information

2. The well known satirist and poet of Malabar whose genius is responsible for the branch in Malayālam literature called Tullal. ~~He dominated the literary field in Malayalam century after Ezuttaccan~~

3. The author of the History of Malayālam language and literature - vide P.176 of Vol.1 of his work.







resorted to for a specific purpose, no one would like to leave its implication in doubt. While Mr. Panikkar's ingenuity and the wealth of material which he usually brings in are admirable, his reasoning is not equally acceptable in this case. Mr. P. K. Narāyaṇa<sup>1.</sup> Pillay, the well known scholar and critic, has another theory.<sup>2.</sup> Mr. Sankaran Eṣuttaccan in his work on T. Eṣuttaccan quotes a<sup>3.</sup> slōka which is chanted by the gurumatham sanyāsins during their daily prayers and in which the following names of Gurus or Ācāryas occur :-

1. Tuñjattu Srī Guru.
2. Srī Karuṇākaran.
3. Srī Sūryanārāyaṇan.
4. Srī Dēva Guru.
5. Srī Cōpāla Guru.

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1. Page 4 - 12 of his work on T. Eṣuttaccan.

2. Page 5 of his book.

3. Vande.....Tuñjatteṣum Srīgurum  
 Vande.....Karuṇākaranam.....  
 Vande.....Sūryanārāyaṇam.....  
 Vande Dēvagurum.....Cōpālakaṣṛīgurum.  
 Gurumatham pamphlet No.1.p.8.



In this list the first Guru is not mentioned by any specific name. If it refers to Rāman, the elder brother of Ezuttaccan, whose benediction he invokes at the commencement of his Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, Mr.P.K. thinks the second name, viz. Karuṇākaran, must have been that of the poet. There is one difficulty in accepting the position assumed by Mr.P.K. It is not clear from the slōka quoted with whom the guruparampara originated. If it began with Rāman (the elder brother of the poet), the question arises why his name was not specifically mentioned. The probabilities are that the reference has nothing to do with him. As Mr.P.K. himself suggests, the slōka in question was composed by some representative of the line long after the demise of the gurus mentioned therein and long after the maṭham was founded. Besides, persistent tradition and belief point to the inference that it is the name of the author of A.R. and M.B.H. who in his varied capacity as poet, preceptor and saint achieved greater fame than his elder brother, with which the 'Guru Maṭham' is associated. Mr.P.K's assumption that the first name in the slōka refers to Ezuttaccan's brother would lead us to the conclusion that the Maṭham was first founded as a memorial to the elder brother of the poet and not to the celebrated poet himself. This contention is hardly tenable. Except for the reference in A.R. and M.B.H. and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa we ~~do~~ hear nothing about this Rāman, whose importance evidently lies in the fact that he was a great scholar himself and he was our poet's guru. It is no where



mentioned that he was an author. He was no doubt a local celebrity whose position as a teacher and eminent scholar commanded reverence and regard from his disciples. Far be it from me to suggest that he should be deprived of the greatness which is his by virtue of his unique position in his own field. What I want to emphasise is that his disciple and brother by his unrivalled eminence in the teaching world, the realm of letters, and the society of Kérala acquired a status which was not by the very nature of the case within the reach of the elder brother; and it is therefore more reasonable to assume that the people of Kérala thought of a memorial to him and not to the elder brother. The fact that he was known better by his title than by his name lends additional weight to the argument. When the people of a country confers a title on one of their distinguished citizens it is generally done as a mark of their respect, regard and gratitude for the services rendered by him; and they would naturally prefer to call their hero by the title which they respectfully bestowed on him and which has some direct reference to the chief characteristics of his personality instead of by his name, which is useful only for the purpose of identification. We do not find the title 'Eṣuttacean' conferred upon any other distinguished son of Kérala before the author of A.R., and the first person who received the title was known as 'the Eṣuttacean of the Tuñjattu family'. This explains why the first guru in the slōka quoted was referred to as only 'the guru' and not by any specific







known is therefore no discredit either to himself or to the people of Malabar, who on the contrary, honoured their idol and themselves by a distinctive title which signified at once the extent of their homage and his greatness.

Those who followed his footsteps in literature and the profession of teaching were also by courtesy called by the same title. Eṣuttaccan, which in course of time became a general appellation for teachers.

Eṣuttaccan's date.      Views of European Scholars.

When we come to the question of Eṣuttaccan's date we are fortunately on more certain grounds, although no absolute precision can yet be attained. The first European scholar to take an interest in the great poet of Kēraḷa was Dr. Burnell. He published a note on Eṣuttaccan in one of the numbers of Trübner's American and Oriental Literary Record.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting in many respects, and I reproduce it in extenso below.

"Some five years ago when I was residing at Palghat in Malabar I had occasion to pass through the Chittur Taluq of the Cochin State and took the opportunity of visiting an Agrahāram or Brāhmin Village there which is remarkable in the history of Malabar. It was founded by Eṣuttaccan the author of all the popular versions in Malayālam of sanskrit purāṇas and epic poems and made over to a few brāhmin families on condition of their preserving always in a house there

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1. January Number 1871. p.78.



mss. of his works copied by his daughter to which daily reverence was to be paid. Tuñjattežuttaccan was by no means of high caste but he must have been a man of great talents. Before his time the characters used for writing Malayālam was the imperfect  
 1. alphabet we find in the famous inscriptions in the possession of the Jews and the Syrians of Cochin. He managed to learn Sanskrit though as his translations prove in a very superficial way - and translated the Rāmāyana, Bhāgavata (Mahābhārata ??) and some other works and introduced the use of ārya alphabet now used for writing Malayālam but which before his time was appropriated to the sacred sanskrit and known only to the Nambūdiris and Brāhmins. I found that the house at the end of the south side of the street was devoted to the preservation of the mss. and with a little persuasion the brāhmin who attended to it allowed me to enter. I found the mss. on a copper tray placed on a stool and smeared with sandal paste and flowers thrown over them. There was only one of the original mss. left, a beautifully written copy of the vernacular bhāgavata on about 200 talipat leaves. Many of the leaves were broken, but at the end I found the title deed of the village which proved that Tuñjattežuttaccan lived at the end of the 17th Century A.D. This is corroborated by the succession of teachers beginning with him. His history is however completely overlaid with fables and even his real name (Tuñjattu is the house name and Ežuttaccan the name of the caste) is quite unknown. The other mss. in the house were put

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1. Perhaps the author refers to Vattežuttu and Kōležuttu.



there to replace the originals which had been burned in a fire about 30 years before and were perfectly worthless (??) In the neighbourhood the legendary localities of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahabharata have been localised and are thoroughly believed in. Before the 17th Century there seems to have been but <sup>1.</sup> little vernacular literature in Malabar. Dr. Gundert discovered some old songs but they are quite Hindu in their tone".

We are at present concerned only with the title deed and its date. The <sup>other</sup> issues raised in that will be subjected to a closer analysis when Eṣuttaccan's position in malayalam literature is discussed in the course of this work. It evidently relates to the date of the founding of the Gurumatham of Chittur. As already indicated, opinion among scholars as to the real founder of the matham is not unanimous, although local tradition ascribes it to Eṣuttaccan himself. It is extremely unlikely that a man of Eṣuttaccan's eminence, who studiously avoids personal references in his works except when praising his favourite deity Viṣṇu or others, his brother for instance, ever thought of a memorial for himself. The author <sup>2.</sup> of the Malabar Manual gives a different version of the story. Says he - "It is said as Eṣuttaccan lay on his deathbed he told his daughter (?) that at a particular hour on a particular day in a certain month and a certain year which he named a

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1. Chapter 1. disproves this statement.

2. p.92, 94, Vol.1.



youth would come to his house. His daughter was directed to have his house swept and garnished as for a distinguished guest and his directions were that to his visitor his sandals and his books should be given. On the appointed day and at the appointed house came one Sūryanārāyaṇa Eṣuttaccan, then<sup>1.</sup> a youth of sixteen years and of the Tarakan Caste. He received the sandals and the books and went his way. This Sūryanārāyaṇan became 'Gurunāthan' (Teacher or tutor) to the Zamorin and afterwards set out on a pilgrimage to Benares and other places, wandering about and leading a holy life till he was thirty two years old. He then returned to Malabar and was directed in a vision thrice repeated to settle on a river bank then a jungle place, at what is now called Chittur Tekke Grāmmam in Cochin territory east of Palghat. He then bought some ground and, helped by the Zamorin and others, built in one of the streets a row of houses for the Brāhmanas and in the middle on the opposite side one for himself. He next invited some Brāhman families to settle there, which they did, attracted by the holiness of Sūryanārāyaṇa Eṣuttaccan's life and character. He never married, but lived and died a Sannyāsin (ascetic) and Tuñjattaṣuttaccan's relics were, it is said, there sacredly preserved and worshipped till with one exception they were

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1. This caste is to be distinguished from the Tarakans of Travancore, who are Christians. The Tarakans of S. Malabar are Hindus following trade as their vocation. They, unlike the Nāyars, follow the paternal system of inheritance and their marriage customs resemble those of the East Coast. Originally they must have been brokers, as 'taraku' means brokerage.



destroyed by fire 30 or 40 years ago. The stool and the staff mentioned by Dr. Burnell in his S. Indian Palaeography belonged, it is said, to the ascetic and not to the father of modern Malayālam, and another fire it is believed destroyed these relics since Dr. Burnell's visit and also probably the Bhāgavatham, the only thing saved from the previous conflagration. Tuñjattezuttaccan's memory however, is not likely to die down, for relics thus lost are easily replaced and the sacred honours paid to them are easily paid to the substitutes.<sup>t</sup> Both these accounts, though apparently contradictory, agree on one point. There seems to be unanimity of opinion between them regarding the founder of the gurumatham. It is evident from Dr. Burnell's note that he saw at the gurumatham only the manuscript of the Malayālam Bhāgavatam, and his observations on Ezuttaccan's standing in the literary world of Kēraḷa are based on that only. A comparative study of A.R. and Mahābhāratam and Bhāgavatam will make anyone hesitate to accept the view that ascribes the authorship of Bhāgavatam to the master mind that produced the other two epics, as the former in all respects is a third rate work. Even as a translation its merits are not beyond question, as there are a good many passages, particularly in the Ēkādasam, which show that the exact implications of the original have been either imperfectly understood or wrongly reproduced in the translation. It is the unanimous opinion of scholars that the only portion in it which possesses any literary merit

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~~1. These will be examined at length in the Chapter on Ezuttaccan's standing in the literary world of Malabar.~~



is the Dasamam, which on that account is believed to be the result of Eṣuttaccan's master-touch. It is highly probable therefore, that Sūryanārāyaṇa Eṣuttaccan, who from all accounts was more a saint than a poet, is the author of this Bhāgavatam. The reverence with which the work is regarded is perhaps part of the homage paid by the people of Kēraḷa to his saintly character. Besides, Bhāgavata Purāṇa being the mainstay of Vaiṣṇavic philosophy, the translation was welcomed by those belonging to the school as a solid contribution to their creed. As Eṣuttaccan was the founder of the school, his disciple quite possibly shared the glory of his guru through the medium of this work. With the passage of time the memories of the two Saints, having certain features in common, were mixed up in tradition and could not be easily separated. This fact, I am inclined to believe, also accounts for the uncertainty regarding the founder of the Matham. The version given by the author of the Malabar Manual has therefore to be preferred in point of authenticity. Dr. Burnell also supports this view indirectly.

If Sūryanārāyaṇa<sup>1</sup> Eṣuttaccan is accepted as the founder of the gurumatham, and if he is assigned on the authority of Dr. Burnell to the latter half of the 17th century, the date of the 'Eṣuttaccan', who appears as first and Sūryanārāyaṇan as the third in the genealogy maintained by the Gurumatham, must be pushed back 2 generations earlier.

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1. The author of the Gurumatham pamphlet No.1 is also of this view (p.3).



The views of Malabar Scholars.

Mr. Govinda Pillay, the author of the History<sup>1.</sup> of Malayālam Literature, makes a passing reference to the views of Kōvunṇi Nedungādi, Dr. Burnell, Dr. Gundert, and Mr. Logan. Nedungādi assigns Eṣuttaccan to the 7th Century M.E. (15th Century A.D.), while others bring him down to the 17th century. Mr. Govinda Pillay prefers a via media, as he thinks Nedungādi's date is too early and that proposed by the others too late, and he is inclined to fix the latter half of the 15th century or the first half of the 16th century A.D. as Eṣuttaccan's date. He does not argue out the point, but seems to have tumbled upon the truth by instinct. He cites the Kali chronogram 'Āyurārōgya Saukhyam' that appears at the end of the Nārāyaṇīyam of Meppattur, whom he regards as a contemporary of our poet, and also sponsors a statement that Eṣuttaccan was middle-aged when Bhaṭṭatiri was young. He leaves us absolutely in the dark as to the authority on which he relies for the view.

<sup>3.</sup> In the introduction to the Malayālam edition (1878) of A.R. Kattayāṭṭu Govinda Menon, the last Prime Minister of the Zamorin draws attention to another chronogram "pavitramparam Saukhyam" (Sūryah) which he thinks has reference to Eṣuttaccan's Samādhi. The same is quoted by the Gurumatham authorities also. Here again we have no idea of the source.

1. The history of Malayālam Literature, p.174-175 Vol.1.

2. The author of "Kēraḷa Kaumudī" a treatise on Malayālam Grammar and Rhetoric.

3. This is an edition in Malayālam characters of the original A.R.



The appearance of Sūrah<sup>4</sup> in another version of the same chronogram makes us pause before we accept it without any reservations. It is on a par with the oft-quoted chronogram about the great Sankara, viz. Ācāryavāgabhēdya, which by its very isolation is of suspicious authenticity. It was usual with Sanskrit writers of the age, and also with Malayālam writers who knew Sanskrit, to frame a chronogram at the end of their works to denote the dates of their completion. The one under discussion is not associated with any notable work, and it is not safe to build too much on such a shaky foundation.

1.  
Mr. R. Nārāyaṇa Paṇikkar supports Mr. Govinda Pillay in his attempt to establish Eṣuttaccan's contemporaneity with Meppattur, and introduces Acyuta Piṣārōṭi, the legendary guru of Meppattur, into the discussion. He produces a genealogy of Piṣārōṭi<sup>2</sup> and his disciples which takes us five generations down, ending with Nedumpurayil Kṛṣṇanāśān, whose chronicle records

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1. Kēraḷa Bhāṣa Sāhitya Caritram.....Vol. II. p. 270-276

2. Piṣārōṭi was a famous astrologer, who came like Eṣuttaccan and Meppattur from Vettattunād and was a teacher of that Science.

#### ACYUTA PIṢĀRŌṬI

|                          |   |                                                         |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | 1 |                                                         |
| Meppattur<br>Bhāṭṭatiri. | 1 | 1. Kṛpāmkara Poduvāl.                                   |
|                          | 1 | 2. Nāvaya Kulatti Aṣṭi.                                 |
|                          | 1 | 3. Pulimukhattu <sup>1</sup> Pōrri.                     |
|                          | 1 | 4. Rāmanāśān                                            |
|                          | 1 | 5. Kṛṣṇanāśān ( 975 Mēdom)<br>( M.E. )<br>(=1800 A.D. ) |



the specific dates of Mēpattur Bhaṭṭatiri's birth and death - (birth 735 M.E. (1531 A.D.), death 841 M.E. (1637 A.D.)). As these dates generally agree with those given in chronograms in the famous works of Mēpattur (it may be observed in passing that the author of the Nārāyaṇīyam lived 106 years), the date of Bhaṭṭatiri can be accepted beyond doubt. But it must be stated at the same time that irrefutable evidence of the kind is not available in proof of Eṣuttaccan's contemporaneity with Mēpattur Bhaṭṭatiri, on which the whole theory is based and which even now is hanging loosely on tradition. Till such is forthcoming no final verdict can be pronounced on the subject.

There is another argument which Mr. Panikkar advances. This is suggested by a reference to a guru by name 'Nīlakanṭhan' in the Hari-nāma-kīrttanam, a poem in stōtra style, which is generally assigned to Eṣuttaccan, Mr. Panikkar identifies this 'Nīlakanṭhan', who is presumed to be a Nambūdiri<sup>1</sup>, with the author of Tenkailāsanāthōdayam and Cellūr Māhātmyam<sup>2</sup>, whose dates are ascertained to be 776 M.E. and 740 M.E. respectively. This theory raises a number of other issues<sup>3</sup> which have to be elucidated. The reference in question does not make it quite clear that this Nīlakanṭhan was a Nambūdiri, although the name is more commonly used by the members of that

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1) Two Maṇipravāla Cāmpus (compositions in mixed verse and prose dealing with the importance of Trichūr and Chittūr temples in Cochin State.

3. Ampēnamenmanasi Srīnīlakanṭh guru.....



community. Even assuming for argument's sake that it relates to a Nambūdiri, there was another 'Nīlakanṭhan'<sup>1.</sup> who belonged to Trikkantiyur itself and is better known as a scholar and Tāntrikan and who being a neighbour stands a better chance of being Eṣuttaccan's guru. Even if the identify<sup>t</sup> of Nīlakanṭhan is established, there is no absolute certainty about the authorship of Harināmakīrttanam which by the way has a better claim to be regarded as Eṣuttaccan's work than Mahābhāgavatam.

Mr.P.K.Nārāyaṇa Pillay's Views.

Mr.P.K.opens the discussion by recalling the<sup>2.</sup> kali date (Nākaśyānyūna~~ṣ~~aukhyam ) contained in the śloka relating to the founding of Gurumatham of C<sup>3.</sup>ittur, which according to this evidence took place in the 11th Tulam 729 M.E.(1555 A.D.). There is no need to examine this point further, except to note that the śloka in question declares unmistakably Sūryanārāyaṇan to be the founder of the Gurumatham, which had been in existence in the latter half of the 16th century A.D. In this connection Mr.P.K.suggests the probability of Sūryanārāyaṇan being the name of Eṣuttaccan himself, which is<sup>4.</sup> however not warranted by the passage he quotes from 'Kaivalyanavanītam', in which Tuñjattācāryan and Sūryanārāyaṇācāryan are separately mentioned.

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1. Mr.P.K.Nārāyaṇa Pillay refers to this person vide his work on E.p.21

2. Gurumatham pamphlet No.1.p.6.

3. This being the only evidence now available about the date of the foundation of Gurumatham it is not clear how Dr.Burnell assigns it to the 17th century.

4. Page 17 of his work on E.



In examining the theory about the identity of 'Nīlakanṭhan' Mr.P.K.is inclined to associate the name with the well-known author of Tantra Samgraham and Ārya Bhaṭṭiyan<sup>1.</sup><sup>2.</sup> who belonged to Trikkantiyūr, the birth place of Eṣuttaccan. The date of Tantra Samgraham, according to the internal evidence of the work, is 676 M.E.(1502 A.D.), which is 53 years earlier than the Gurumatham date. Mr.P.K's identification of Nīlakanṭhan has some support from the fact that there exists a coterie of people following the Tāntric cult in S.Malabar, of which the Cōṣiyatt Eṣuttaccan family (of Katampaṣipuram S.Malabar) already referred to, is a notable example, claiming direct descent from Eṣuttaccan. It is probable that Eṣuttaccan learned the practice of the secret cult from this Nīlakanṭhan.

But there is still the question of the authorship of Harināma Kīrtanam, in which the mention of Nīlakanṭhan occurs staring us in the face. As I have already observed, it does not stand comparison with Eṣuttaccan's masterpieces, masterpieces, although I am prepared to admit that all the works of the same author cannot be expected to attain the same standard of excellence. I am at the same time sure that scholars who have examined the work of a great writer will be able to discern traces of the master hand even in his second rate productions. The spontaneity and richness of expression

1. An authoritative work on Tāntric cult.
2. A standard work on astrology.



and a charming effortless felicity of diction which are the outstanding characteristics of Eṣuttaccan's poetry are absent in Harināma Kīrtanam, which at the same time bears the stamp of the Eṣuttaccan's school in its profundity of thought, terseness of expression and Vaiṣṇavic bias. The doubt as to its authorship, however, is not groundless.

A new theory. With the above tentative conclusions about the age of Eṣuttaccan we will now proceed to view the question from another angle. There is one aspect of the subject raised by his insistence on the cult of Bhakti which so far has either escaped the attention of the scholars or received insufficient recognition at their hands. No student of Eṣuttaccan can fail to notice the extraordinary emphasis he lays on the doctrine of Bhakti and its efficacy as a stepping stone to salvation. <sup>1.</sup> Meḇattur and <sup>2.</sup> Pūnṭānam, who lived in the same age also have the same dominant note in their works. It is worth while to enquire how far the social and political conditions of the day stood in need of a message of the kind which they were at pains to present to their contemporaries.

The following lines occurring in the prologue of A.R. deserve special notice in this connection.

\*3. "Those who are not devoted to me fall into the pitfalls of science in good faith and lose themselves!"

4. "A hundred thousand births will not bring supreme knowledge and salvation to those devoid of Bhakti."

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1. His work 'Nārāyaṇīyam' embodies the out-pourings of his devotion to the Lord of Guruvāyūr (Kṛṣṇa).

2. He sings:-

"When the boy Kṛṣṇa plays in the mind why should there be another boy as one's off-spring" in his Jñānappāna.

3. Malbhaktivimukhaṇmār... 4. Bhaktihīnanmārku.....



These sentiments are put in the mouth of Sita, who at the instance of Rāma explains the inner significance of spiritual life and Rāma's incarnation to Hanumān, who is the supreme example of Bhakti (devotion to God).<sup>1.</sup> The doctrine of Bhakti presupposes a favourite deity to whom the devotee surrenders or dedicates his or her life or service. Before we understand why the importance of selfless devotion to God was proclaimed to a race of warriors (Nāyars) that once worshipped self as a deity and strength as a virtue, paying no attention to the soul or its struggles, we must peep into their past history.

<sup>2.</sup> The year 825 A.D., which saw the commencement of the Kollam Era, is in every way remarkable in the history of Malabar. It marked the end of the Perumāḷ period, in which generally peace and prosperity prevailed, and the dawn of a new epoch which converted Kēraḷa into a hot-bed of internal dissension, disorder and warfare. The removal of a single central authority that for long had bound together the various warring elements, at least for political purposes, was the signal for a general revolt on the part of the different Nāyar chieftains, who saw in it an opportunity to declare their independence and consolidate their position. The dominant class of Nāyars, consisting of ruling chiefs, the army and leading

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1. Writers like Romain Rolland prefer the word 'dedication' as self surrender is the cardinal principle of the cult. ~~xxxxxx~~

2. There are various theories about the Kollam Era. Some believe that it commemorates the partition of Malabar into small principalities under different chieftains by Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ others associate it with the death of the famous philosopher Sankara. The astrologers look upon it as the date on which the astrological calculations based on the movements of the moon gave place to those of the sun.



commoners, first turned their attention to the village assemblies, which from ancient times virtually controlled the administration, settled disputes, and formed the back-bone<sup>1.</sup> of Malabar polity.

Nāṭuvāṅṅis. The so called Nāṭuvāṅṅis were only the executive authorities of these assemblies and carried out their orders. They consisted of the representatives of the people, and by their very structure were opposed to any attempt at personal aggrandisement, managing the affairs of the state with a view to secure the general welfare of the people. The chieftains found in them a serious obstacle to their ambitions, and therefore endeavoured to undermine their authority gradually. The assemblies were not suppressed immediately. They continued to function as before; but the war-lords, who had the man-power of the state under their control, began to dictate terms to them.<sup>2.</sup> A systematic policy of the kind pursued for some time resulted in the loss of their decisive voice in matters of State, which was secured by the chieftains, to whom the assemblies began to be subordinate. Having consolidated their position thus by converting the assemblies into mere advisory bodies, the Chieftains, who had

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1. Ref:Malabar Manual by Logan Vol.I - p.88.89.  
History of Kēraḷa by K.P.Padmanābha Menon Vol.I.p.250-269.
  2. Modern Europe affords ample illustrations of democratic countries yielding to dictators during critical times.



by this time assumed the title of Raja embarked upon more  
1.

ambitious ventures. The Perumāl rule, with its paramount power  
over the whole of Kēraḷa, still remained their ideal; and the

2.  
glamour of the Māmānkam festival, which conferred the suzerainty

on the Perumāl, the chieftain who presided over that function,

developed a spirit of competition among the different chiefs

who coveted the honour. Since the days of the Perumāl the

presidential chair of the festival was occupied for a long time

by the Valluvanād Rāja by common consent. The first formidable

rival who challenged this position was the Zamorin of Calicut,

who mustered his forces and dealt the final blow to the occupant

3.  
of the Mamānkam Chair in 925 A.D. (100 M.E.). Before this feat

1. The position is analogous to that of 'Vairājya' described in  
Ait:Brāhmaṇa VIII - 14.

..... उत्तरकु रव उत्तर प दाग्नवे"रा ज्ञा यैव - - - -

2. Vide <sup>also</sup> "Corporate Organisation in Ancient India" by Majumdar p.89.
2. The festival that was celebrated once in 12 years in front of the Tirunāvāy Temple (Ponani Taluq, S. Malabar). It was presided over by one of the Chieftains of Malabar who was for the time acknowledged to be overlord of Kēraḷa owing to rivalries between different parties, men from outside had once been chosen who were above party politics, and the selection was from the Royal families of Cēras or Cōlas or Pāndyas. They were called Perumāls. The festival was significant in many ways. A large assembly representing the various political units of Kēraḷa sat in Session then and decided questions of an all-Kēraḷa character. There were also Committees appointed to decide and award prizes to men for distinction in various arts and sciences, including the art of theft. The last Māmānkam was held in 786 M.E. Mithunam 22 (1612 A.D.).

3. Kēraḷa Caritram by K. Krishnanunni Nāṭr Chapter 14.



was accomplished the Zamorins had to their credit a series of victories and conquests, the most important of them being those of Pōlanād and Vettattunād. They had by this time assumed the title of KunnalaKōn<sup>1.</sup> literally king of the hills and the sea, and become the most powerful and wealthy potentates of the West Coast, enjoying the monopoly of an extensive trade with Arabia<sup>2.</sup> and other countries of the West. They had in their wars of aggrandisement the active support of Arab merchants, who had by this time grown to be an influential community in Calicut<sup>3.</sup> and were known by the name Māppilas. As sailors and merchants they were supreme in the Arabian Sea. Their resources were always at the disposal of the Zamorin, who was the first to welcome them to the West Coast, and their loyalty to their patron was in every way remarkable. The part played by one Arab merchant, by name Kōya<sup>4.</sup>, in the Zamorin's triumph at Tīrunāvāy is one of the many instances in which the Arab merchants exhibited their readiness to co-operate with the

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1. Kunnu = hill, ala = sea, Kōn = a king.

2. Kēraḷa Caritram by K.K.Nāyar, p.14.

3. The meaning of this word is not properly understood by many. Some confuse this with a Tamil word Māpila which means son-in-law, and others ingeniously describe it from Mahā-Pillai, Big son. The proper derivation seems to be from the Arabic word Māffil, which means congregational worship which distinguishes other religionists from the Hindus. The term is used for christians also in Travancore who also follow the same method of worship.

4. Kōya seems a corruption of the persian word Khōja = a gentleman - Kōya is a title of distinction among the Māpilas of Malabar. Arrukkōyatangal of Ponani is the prominent of such title holders.



Zamorin in his career of conquest. But the assumption of the  
 1.  
 Māmānkam Chair was only the beginning of a protracted struggle.  
 At every Māmānkam festival after this event the Valluvanād Rāja  
 2.  
 sent one hundred soldiers or less to contest 'the chair of  
 honour' on his behalf. They put up a desperate fight against  
 odds (sometimes 50,000 men), and every one of them died on the  
 spot. The superior might of the Zamorin was not shaken by  
 these fruitless exhibitions of valour, which at the same time  
 had the effect of keeping alive the fire of hostility, between  
 the two Royal families which not infrequently extended beyond  
 the ground of the Māmānkam. Gradually annexation by force of  
 4.  
 territories belonging to the Valluvanād Rāja by the Zamorin  
 became a regular feature of this rivalry, which entailed  
 continuous warfare for several centuries, throwing the whole  
 of S.Malabar, comprising Vettattunād, Ernād, Valluvanād, and

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1. The vanquished kingdoms of Pōlanād and Vettattunād never missed any opportunity afforded by the Zamorin's preoccupations elsewhere to put up a strenuous fight to regain their lost position.

It must be remembered that the convention of the age demanded that the President at Tirunāvāy should never interfere with the internal administration of the principalities which paid him nominal homage. Trouble naturally arose when the Zamorin defied this time-honoured practice.

2. These soldiers were called cāvārs (vide note under page 49)

3. Vide Hamilton's account of the Māmānkam quoted by Logan-Malabar Manual Vol.I.p.162-163.

4. The acquisition of Nedunganād, which was then under the Chieftain named Nedunganādtiripād, who previously owed allegiance to the Valluvanād Rāja, was the most notable event of the period.



Nedunganād, into a condition of devastation and decay. The Zamorin's dealings in Vettattunād brought him into conflict with the Royal family of Perumpatappu (Cochin), whose relations with Vettattunād were always friendly. Very often members<sup>1.</sup> of the Vettattunād family were adopted by Perumpatappa. The wars carried on by successive Zamorins had most disastrous effects upon the people and the country at large. Bloodthirsty ruffians posing as the guardians of peace seized upon the slightest excuse to pounce upon their neighbours and plunder their property, and the atmosphere was surcharged with mutual disgust and despair, resulting in a general sense of insecurity and fear. The war-mentality, sedulously nurtured by constant conflict, reduced humane considerations to the lowest ebb, and wild display of human strength became the fashion of the day. Neither God nor the thought of God which generally tempers the militant and ferocious aspect of man found any place in the general scheme of things. An intensification of the military training and discipline<sup>2.</sup>, with no cultural advancement to ensure the morals of the army, was the result. The preoccupations of the ruling and the fighting classes in aggressive warfare enabled the priestly class (Nambūdiri Brāhmans), "who like the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages constituted a supra-national body owing but shadowy allegiance

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1. Malabar Gazetteer.p.44.

2. The Cāvēr songs and Taccōli Pāttus illustrate this mentality.



1.  
to the temporal power", to strengthen their sectarian organisations, which accentuated the distinctions already existing in other communities and affected their solidarity and free developments. The temples, which had by this time passed under their absolute control, and the landed properties attached to them constituted their main source of influence over the masses. The people who cultivated the lands as tenants had to part with a considerable proportion of the produce by way of rent and periodical offerings to the temple Deity; and the pūjari or sāntikāran<sup>2.</sup> by the powers he exercised<sup>3.</sup> loomed larger in importance than the deity. A society which was thus a helpless prey to the physical persecutions of the Nāṭr soldiers on one side and the priestly exactions of the Nambūdiris on the other could hardly be expected to be happy and contented.

By the end of the 15th Century the Zamorin was able to suppress the powers against whom he had been fighting

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1. Malabar and the Portuguese by K.M.Panikkar, p.12.

2. The Brāhman priest in charge of the temple.

3. The following slōka of unknown authorship gives us a picture of the priests of the day.

Sāntidvijaprakurute bahudīpasānti  
Pakvājyapāyasagulai Jātharāgnīsānti  
Tatrātyabālavanitā Madanārtisānti  
Kālakramēna Paramēswarasaktisānti

'Sānti' in Malayālam means temple service, i.e. Pūja. It also means the final stage or contentment. The author of this stanza uses this in its double sense. The Sānti Brāhman, he says, first performs the Sānti (annihilation) of lamps. By means of fruits and puddings he performs the Sānti (annihilation) of the fire of his stomach. With the temple women-servants he quenches the fire of lust; and in course of time he accomplishes the destruction of the deity too.'



for centuries and establish authority from Cannanore to Quilon. To quote Mr. Panikkar again, "Undoubtedly, the course of Malabar history during the two centuries previous to the arrival of the Portuguese was in the direction of an increase of the Zamorin's power and the establishment of a Malabar confederation under his authority. But this very process gave rise to jealousies and feuds".<sup>1.</sup> The success of the Zamorin would have ushered in a new era of peace and plenty, but the arrival of the Portuguese at this critical juncture added fresh complications to the situation. They insisted on direct dealings with the rulers, ignoring the intermediary Nāyar officers, and often resorted to intrigue, which led to violent vengeance and retaliation on either side. The internal confusion was therefore intensified by the Western intruders,<sup>2.</sup> who unlike the Arab merchants played the dangerous game of purchasing the King by offering him costly presents and similar gifts<sup>3.</sup> and estranging his officers. The history of Malabar in the 16th Century is thus the history of Portuguese intrigue to capture the pepper monopoly from the Arab merchants who had the support of the Nāyar administrators and militia, and thereby to undermine their power and prestige. This policy

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1. Malabar and the Portuguese.p.25.

2. They concentrated on their sea trade and never troubled about the politics of the country.

3. Malabar and the Portuguese.p.53.



had a very demoralising effect on the officers and the people at large, who, seared by the foreigners and their new weapons of warfare, were driven to despair and inhuman conduct.

The crisis was without parallel in the history of the West Coast, and the very foundations of the structure of Kēraḷa Society seemed to be shaken by the new menace to its solidarity. There was a general cry for peace and renewed confidence in life.

The occasion called for the resources of an all-round genius for its solution, and the people found their saviour in Eḻuttaccan, who appeared on the scene with his message of hope when the tragic drama reached its climax in the early part of the 16th century, which witnessed the mass-massacre organised by Vasco de Gama and Marshall Affonso de <sup>1</sup>Alberquerque. His vision saw the danger ahead that awaited his countrymen, who had been reduced by the lack of a common bond and by centuries of petty quarrels into innumerable small units, admirable in themselves but unable to resist the organised and disciplined invasions of a mighty foe whose unlimited resources and strange weapons baffled them. Their guns introduced a new factor, against which the West Coast could offer no effective resistance. It was a fight between the old and new weapons of warfare, in which the latter were

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1. Indies Adventure - by Elaine Sanceau, vide p.98-100  
Malabar and the Portuguese, p.51,52. Kēraḷa Paḻama, p.30.



at a decided advantage. The people had become tired of war, corruption, and conspiracies, which were only leading them further down the road of degradation and were in a fit condition to look inward and receive a spiritual message. The Vaiṣṇavic movement, that entered upon a new phase on the disappearance of Timur and of his "bloodstained horsemen" in the beginning of the 14th century, and gathered fresh momentum from the devotional fervour infused into it by Caitanya in Bengal (1485 A.D.) , Mirābai in Mewār (15th Cen.) and aroused a distant echo in the West Coast also, which had had a foretaste of it through the teachings of the Ālvars (8th Cen). and Rāmānujācārya (11th Cen.) and the immortal songs of Jayadēva (12th Cen.). The works of Kannaśśan and Ceruśśeri, forerunners of Eṣuttaccan in the literary field, had already down the seed of the cult, which was only waiting for the magic touch of the poet-saint to blossom and yield fruit. To such a people the/

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1. Swāmi Vivēkānanda advocates Bhakti for a country of fighting races. (Prophets of the New India by Romain Rolland, Translated by E.F. Malcolm-Smith, p.335, n.23).

2. Literary History of India by Dr. Fraser, p.345.

3,4,5,6,7. An outline of the Religious Literature of India. By J.N. Farquhar, p.306,307,187,245,238.

5x. Kulasākharālvār one of the shining lights of these sacred luminaries, belongs to Kērala. (Studies in Tamil literature. By V.R. Ramachandra Dikshiter, p.106).

7x. These songs are very popular in Malabar, and are sung in Vaiṣṇava temples like Guruvāyūr (S. Malabar) during pūja. The first 2 songs used to be sung by the women of Malabar as morning prayer till recent years.



which in the words of Dr.L.D.Barnett "is Godward love in utter<sup>1.</sup> self-surrender", has a special appeal. In the case of the warlike Nāyars of Malabar it was only a case of transferring their devotion from the war-god to the God Viṣṇu. Besides, the human mind in a state of exhaustion will easily accept a single concrete idea which the doctrine of Bhakti embodies, and have no patience with metaphysical speculations. The message of<sup>2.</sup> Bhakti which inspired every line of poetry that emanated from Eṣuttaccan like an irresistible stream possessed an inherent sanctity from his own personality, as he himself was a perfect example of the precepts he preached. His preference for and insistence on Bhakti as the short cut to salvation seems therefore the outcome of a premeditated attempt suggested by the political and social decadence of the society of his time, and was intended as an effective step for the spiritual and cultural redemption of his people, which he willingly undertook as his life-mission. The events already narrated show that the occasion for a gigantic venture of the kind arose in Malabar at the beginning of the 16th Cen<sup>3</sup> or a few years earlier and the conclusion seems quite probable that Tuñjatteṣuttaccan lived and gave his message at this critical period. His disciples followed his example with ever increasing enthusiasm for the mission of their master, with the result that a prodigious quantity of

1. The Heart of India, p.43

2. Vide chapter V.

3. Dr. Sundert also to a certain extent seems to favour this view although he is not very specific (South Indian Palaeography (1878) note 4, p.42.)



quasi-religious literature began to be poured out for nearly a century. It is only in the fitness of things that the sacred memory of such a saviour is cherished to this day.



ADHYĀTMA RĀMĀYANAM.

Chapter III.



## Chapter III

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam.Introductory.

As the Rāmāyaṇa and its innumerable versions in the various languages of India have become an integral part of the culture of India, it is not often that an attempt at a critical analysis of it is understood in the right spirit. Rāma is not only the hero of the epic poem, but also a god worshipped throughout the length and breadth of India. Gods are above criticism and comment, which according to popular belief emanates from a lack of faith in them. But when they enter the domain of letters the critic has to deal with them in the same manner as he handles others. His task, therefore, is bound to be necessarily embarrassing, as Hindu thinkers have mixed up religion and letters, and the criticism that aims at one affects the other too. If the hero of the great epic is treated as other epic heroes, the sentiments of the ultra-religious will not be at ease, as in their eyes the very attempt is reprehensible. If he is raised to the skies without minding what the poet has made of him, aesthetic criticism loses much of its value, as it declines to help the proper appreciation of the epic, which is its main function. The critics so far have left the field open, and we find as a result frantic attempts made presumably on behalf of religion to justify even the most abominable acts of Rāma, which would have called for the



severest condemnation in the case of mortals.

There is evidence to think that Rama was once an ordinary mortal, and it took several centuries before he was raised to the level of a God. An examination of the opening portions of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa and A.R. will make the point clear. Vālmīki, the author of the great epic, asks Nārada, the celestial sage, who was the best of Kings; and Nārada, giving the palm to Rāma, narrates his story, which the poet (sage) hermit weaves into an epic.<sup>1.</sup> Vālmīki wanted only an ideal man as hero for his epic.

#### 1. To Sainted Nārada.....

The good Vālmīki, first and best of hermit-saints, these words addressed -

"In all this world, I pray thee, who  
is virtuous, heroic, true,  
firm in his vows, of grateful mind  
to every creature good and kind  
bounteous and holy just and wise  
alone most fair to all men's eyes -

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who may with Sun and Moon compare  
with Indra, Viṣṇu, Fire and Air  
Great Saint divine, this boon I ask -

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If such a man breathe here below:  
Page 3 canto.1. R.T.Griffith's translation  
of Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa - 1870.



### The influence of Vaisnavism.

A dialogue between Pārvati and Siva forms the prelude to the A.R. Both the questioner and the person who gives the answer are divine beings. Pārvati, who know about Rāma, asks her lord to unfold to her the mystery underlying the greatness of Rāma and tell her his story. In Bṛuttacān's epic there is a reference to a previous episode<sup>1.</sup> in Vālmiki's life. He lived the life of a hunter and robber,<sup>2.</sup> and once waylaid the 'Seven Sages'. They asked him what he wanted, and his answer was : "I have to support my family, and I rob people of their belongings for that". The Sages enquired further whether he realised that robbery was a sin, and whether his family would share with him the punishment which his action entails. He referred the matter to his wife and children, who unhesitatingly declared that, while they were quite willing to enjoy the benefits of his labour, they were not prepared to share any responsibility for his evil actions, which he must bear himself. The sages, when informed of this reply, pointed out the folly of his action, which would bring him only degradation and ultimately lead him to

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1. (a) Rāmanāmathe Japicōru Kāttalanmunam Māmanipravarānāi Vannatu Kandu Dhāta - Bhūmiyilu ūa Jantukalku Mōkṣārthamānini Sri Mahārāmāyanam camekennaruloaitu.

(b) This is based upon the original.

2. Marīci, Angiras, Vasistā, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, and Atri.



hell. He then asked them to advise as to how he should reform himself. The sacred name of Rāma was then mentioned to him, and he was asked to repeat it till he should be blessed with the inner light. The magic power of the name<sup>1.</sup> of Rāma transformed him into a saint with the gift of poetry. Brahma, knowing this, asked him to write the story of Rāma for the benefit of mankind. The Goddess of learning<sup>2.</sup> blessed him, and the epic was the result. This legend is<sup>3.</sup> no doubt of later origin, as we hear it for the first time with the appearance of A.R., which is a fact significant in itself. A long period must have intervened between A.R. and Vālmīki's immortal work, witnessing many a change in the religious conceptions of the Hindus. The Vēdic gods Indra, Rudra, and the Sun gradually gave place to Siva and Viṣṇu, whose glories were sung by Upaniṣads and later ritualistic literature. When the Bhagavadgīta established the importance of the cult of Viṣṇu-Rāma on a synthetic basis, it attained the vigour and status of a new creed,

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1. The name Vālmīki is derived from 'Vālmīkam' ant-hill. The story is that as he sat muttering the name of Rāma for ages an ant-hill rose round him. The sacred name of Rāma preserved his life and he rose out of it a Saint.

2. The Malayāḷa version of the legend adds another interesting detail. The illiterate robber could not pronounce the word Rāma well. So he was asked to begin by pronouncing the words 'Ā Mara (that tree) Ī Mara (this tree), which if repeated quickly sound like Rāma. The word Mara which is a pure dravidian word raises the question of Vālmīki's nationality. The inventors of such stories are not as a rule bothered with such considerations.

3. Theatre of the Hindus, Prof. Wilson, Vol. 1, p. 313.



proving a serious rival to the cult of Śiva. A rehabilitation or a remodelling of the epic themes was therefore found necessary to give the new creed undisputed authority. The ancient folk-tale that forms the basis of the Rāma-legend was later, in the words of Dr. Barnett, "re-adapted and fitted on to an historical Rāma"<sup>1.</sup> who further underwent a process of deification.<sup>2.</sup> He found a place in the cycle of Viṣṇu's ten incarnations. A literary document as a lasting monument to the deification that was proceeding apace soon appeared with its new philosophy identifying Rāma with the supreme Ātma or Paramātmā. Vālmīki's original conception of the ideal King lost its significance, although as a creation of the poetic art it held its sway in the literary field.<sup>3.</sup> The author of the A.R. never misses an opportunity to impress his readers with the divinity of his hero. Nay he even makes in the prelude to his work the rival God Śiva<sup>4.</sup> give his willing testimony, to Rāma's divine attributes, which places his view beyond question. Pārvatī, Śiva's

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1. Page 101, Hindu Gods and Heroes.

2. This tendency is visible even in the later rescensions of the Epic, as is pointed out by Prof. Jacobi and Prof. Macdonnell. (A History of Sanskrit Literature by A.A. Macdonnell p.304,305).

3. The tradition ascribing A.R. to Viśvāmitra need not be taken as an argument against this view, as there is no evidence in its support, and as such scholars have never taken it seriously.

4. The rivalry between the two cults is not a myth but a living faith even now.



Consort, is anxious to know the mystery that surrounds the holy name of Rāma, and she requests her lord to narrate the story of the great king of the Solar line who is held in high esteem by the God of Kailāsa.<sup>1.</sup> In complying with the request of Pārvatī Siva brings home to her mind and to that of the readers that even the very desire to know the story of Rāma is a noble end in itself, which only exceptionally privileged souls would have the chance to achieve. The author of A.R. reduced the God Siva to a pathetic figure, who is not only obliged to praise another god but is forced to rest content with a subordinate position. We may congratulate ourselves that a worse treatment was not meted out to the god who terrorised the whole world in Vēdic times, and who certainly stood in need of some toning-down. But he is hardly responsible for the change. He has only shared the fate of other gods of the Hindu pantheon, who are often victims of the poet's fancy and the devotion of their followers who can make or mar them.<sup>2.</sup> This accounts for the different roles, sometimes self-contradictory, which Hindu Gods play in Purāṇas. Saivaites<sup>3.</sup> return the compliment sometimes with redoubled effect.

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1. The abode of Siva.

2. Hindu Gods and Heroes by Dr.L.D.Barnett.p.120.

3. Viṣṇu is often represented as lying on his snake-bed with his right hand in the act of putting a Vilwa-leaf on a Sivalingam. There is also the story of Brahma and Viṣṇu going round Siva to measure his bulk. ~~Siva-purāṇa, x.p.~~



There is another episode in the beginning of the work in which Rāmāgīta is introduced. Rāma himself reveals his divine character to Hanumān. After the death of Rāvana, Rama returns to Ayōdhya and performs the usual coronation ceremony to proclaim his accession. At the end of the ceremony he calls aside Hanumān and asks Sīta to give him the sacred message containing the secrets of his incarnation, as the monkey-chief by his devotion and life-long celibacy has established his claims for his distinction. The monkey-chief is also warned not to divulge the secret to those who do not believe in Rāma. The author seems to be feeling nervous about the new doctrine or knowledge that he is giving to the world through his version of the epic story.

The motives behind these two digressions are quite apparent. The story is being given a new garb as a piece of religious propaganda; and the author takes care that the new interpretation shall be emphasised at the very commencement, lest readers should miss it in the course of the narration.

Apart from this new conception of Rāma's character and omissions of a few episodes<sup>2.</sup> in Bālakāṇḍa, the main incidents of the story of Rama are the same in Vālmīki's epic and A.R.

1. A Buddhist version of the story by the name 'Dasaratha Jātaka' which by the way alters it considerably is another instance of the need felt by the champions of that faith to make use of the legend for their own propaganda.

2. The episode that Viśvāmitra relates to Rāma and his brother about Bhagīratha's Gangāvataraṇa, which indirectly testifies to Śiva's importance, ~~he~~ finds a place in A.R. only in the form of a casual reference by Rāma to Kaikeyī. Satānanda's narration of Viśvāmitra's adventures in penance and Janaka's narration of his pedigree have been omitted.



An examination of the original materials out of which Vālmīki constructed his immortal work and the extent of his contribution to the legends concerning the personality of Rāma do not come within the scope of our survey. Scholars have proved that it is possible to discover differences between the form which the epic had in the beginning and the form it ultimately assumed by a comparison of the different recensions of the epic available in various parts of India and a close scrutiny of the obvious interpolations in it. The history of the evolution of the epic thus throws light upon the influence of popular conceptions of its nature and upon the alterations it underwent from time to time. With the radical change in the conception of the hero, a new attempt at the representation of the story was inevitable, and the appearance of the A.R. was therefore quite in keeping with the tradition which Rāma-lore maintained throughout.

### The theory of the Aryan invasion of S.India.

A few observations about the background of the story, which apply to all versions, including the A.R., will not be out of place in this connection. Two points of view have been expressed on this subject even at the dawn of critical investigation. According to one school, the epic reflects an

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1. It is not possible to conceive that the story is a pure invention of Vālmīki. He drew no doubt his materials from the popular legends current in his days in the form of bardic lays. (The legacy of India. The article on Language and literature by F.W.Thomas. p.65)

2. Professor Jacobi. (History of Sanskrit literature. By A.A.Mc-donell. p.304, 305).




1.  
historical event, "a war of two hostile races differing in origin, civilisation and worship !!" The adherents of this view developed it later into a picture of the Āryan invasion of S.India and Ceylon.  
2.  
There is still another school, led by Prof. Weber, who rejects the historical hypothesis and holds that the principal characters who figure in Rāmāyana are not historical personages at all but were personifications of certain event and circumstances.  
3.  
Sīta (the furrow), whose name occurs in the Rigveda (R.V. IV 57-6) and in the Grihya ritual as an object of worship, according to him represents "the Aryan agriculture, while he regards Rāma as ploughman personified". The Rāmāyana has only, he thinks, an historical character in so far as it refers to an actual occurrence, the diffusion of Āryan civilisation into the South of the peninsula.  
4.

The two schools, though they differ in details, however, are inclined to take the Āryan invasion of the S.India as an historical fact. Apparently they have ignored an important point, namely the absence of any evidence to prove that Āryans penetrated <sup>in</sup> to S.India by the land route which was followed by Rama according to Vālmīki. Dr. Barnett on the other hand is convinced that the "Āryan immigration to S.India

1. Gorresio's view quoted by Griffiths, Page XIV in his introduction to his English translation of the epic of Vālmīki (1870)

2. Lassen quoted by A.A. Macdonell, History of Sanskrit Literature. p. 310-311.

3. Muir's Sanskrit texts Vol. II. p. 438.

4. <sup>V.R.</sup> Introduction to Griffiths translation p. 15. 



and Lanka was by sea from Bombay and Bengal and not by land." From Rāmāyaṇa itself we know that the tract of lands between the Vindhya Mountains and Cape Comorin was a huge forest impenetrable in many respects. He also raises the question of the army of Rāma, which consisted of monkeys, whom nobody has, so far indentified with Āryans, and not of Āryans, which ought to have been the case if Rāma was on a campaign of conquest. Even these monkeys, whose help was vitually necessary to him in his contest against Rāvaṇa, were acquired by means not very creditable to an Āryan hero who was out to conquer. Besides, as Macdonell points out, it is nowhere indicated that Rāma was founding an Aryan realm in the Dekhan, nor is any such intention on his part suggested anywhere in the epic. The theory is full of absurdities, as according to Vālmīki the territory beyond the Vindhya mountains was, except for a few hermits, inhabited by Rākṣasas and various fabulous creatures, of which he gives fantastic descriptions which betray lack of personal knowledge. Even supposing for argument's sake Vālmīki's work to be an allegorical representation of this kind, it is only a negative evidence and one-sided. What about the positive side ?.

Recent researches in Tamil and other S.Indian languages and the excavations of Mohenjādāro and elsewhere have revealed the existence of a pre-Āryan civilisation in the Indus valley which may possibly be connected with that

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1. Hindu Gods and Heroes.p.102.



of the South. It is necessary to examine in detail the evidence which the investigations on non-Aryan elements of Indian culture have disclosed in recent times. It cuts at the very root of the theory of the Aryan invasion of the South. It looks as if the promoters of the theory have pounced upon the epic for want of any other reliable evidence as a basis for their fanciful idea and have deliberately ignored the other side of the question on which considerable positive evidence exists in Tamil and other prominent S.Indian Languages. I shall therefore attempt to review briefly the materials available in them and suggest the conclusions to which they lead.

The theory that the Rāmāyana is an allegorical representation of the Aryan invasion of the S.India is based on the assumption that there was an Aryan invasion of the South, which has never been proved beyond doubt as an historical fact nor can it be maintained on the basis of Vālmīki's epic, as his account of S.India appears fanciful in the light of S.Indian tradition and literary evidence. The age of the epic again is a disputed point. The views of

1. Scholars, European and Indian, who have gone into the question range from 500 B.C. to 200 B.C., which cover the date of the other epic also. If we take Vālmīki's account of S.India as a true picture of the period, we have to assume (as we have already seen) that it consisted mostly of uncivilised forest

~~Prof. Wilson~~ ~~between 500 and 200 B.C.~~

I ~~Met.~~ A.B. Keith " " "

" Rapson " " "

" Macdonell " " "

History of Sanskrit literature, p.285

(A.A.MACDONELL)

) A History of  
Sanskrit Litr:  
p.43

Ancient India, p.71-72



tribes, and that no ordered government and society was to be found except in Lanka, which was ruled by Rāvana, the enemy of Rāma. As against this we have the testimony of the Rāmāyana itself, in which we find Sugrīva arranging to send envoys to countries like <sup>x.</sup> Andhras, <sup>1.</sup> Pundras, the Cōlas, the Pāndyas and the Kēralas in search of Sīta. If this is an interpolation, it does not stand alone but has its counterpart in the Mahābhārata, as well which according to scholars is separated from Vālmiki's epic only by a century or two, and in which Sahadēva interviews Kings of the Pulindas, <sup>2.</sup> Pāndyas, <sup>3.</sup> Kēralas and Cōlas, whom he could not conquer in battle and whose acquiescence had to be won through diplomatic channels as a preliminary to Rājasūyayaga. It is strange that Rāma does not meet any of these in his wanderings in the South, which were by no means solitary sojourns. Asōka's edicts, the historical value of which is beyond question, proclaim the existence of these kingdoms. <sup>4.</sup> It is inconceivable that a country immersed in barbarism achieved this progress in the course of two centuries, which according to the human method of calculation would have taken several centuries to accomplish. Vālmiki's picture thus stands uncorroborated by

x. Tathaiva andhrasca Pundrasca Cōlan Pāndyansca Kēralāḥ. <sup>Kish. 41-2.</sup>

1. In Adiparva a Pāndyan King appears as one of Draupadis suitors. History of the Tamils by P.T.S. Iyengar, p. 89.
2. Mahābhārata, Sabhaparva. Mal: translation, p. 287, B.C.K. (K.K.T)
3. In Sabhaparva Cōlas and Pāndyas are referred to as carrying sandal oil in golden jars.
4. Asōka's Rock edict (II The Shahbazgarhi version) - Epigraphia Indica, Vol. II, p. 466, quoted in the Chronology of Early Tamils p. 168.



any other sources. The director of the excavations of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa seems inclined from a study of the finds discovered, to the view that they represent a high stage of civilisation, and its affinities to the Dravidian culture are striking. He is even led to think "There are linguistic reasons for believing that it was by way of Baluchistan that the Dravidian races entered India". The relics of Siva-worship and Mother-cult found among the deposits are significant in view of the fact that S.India preserves a continuous tradition of both the cults from remote times to this day and that the two are generally accepted to be of Dravidian origin. This civilisation is roughly assigned to a period between 3000 and 5000 B.C. The excavations of Adichanallur (Tinnevely Dt., S.India) in Chitaldrug Dt. (Mysore State) and Coimbatore reveal a similar story. According to the author of 'Dravidian India' "The Mohenjo-daro and Harappa culture agrees with that of Adichanallur in burying the dead in a crouching position in terra-cotta coffins and in placing food, drink, wearing apparel and weapons ready for their service when they reached another world". We need not go into the question of the identity of these civilisations revealed in N. and S.India.

1. Page VII. Introduction to 'Mohenjo-daro and Indus Civilisation' by Sir John Marshall.

It is noteworthy that the picture of the Mother-Goddess revealed by the finds agrees in every detail with the traditional description of Kālī preserved in religious songs and ritual practices of Malabar (vide p.50.Ibid).

2. Introduction to the History of Indian and Indonesian Art, (A.K.Coomaraswamy), p.5.

3. Dravidian India by T.S.Sesha Iyengar, p.34.

4. Chronology of Early Tamils by T.N.Siva Raja Pillai, p.6.F.N.1.

5. Dravidian India, p.52.



Suffice it to note for our purpose that the conditions of India, and S.India in particular, were not such as are described by Vālmīki even centuries before the Āryans came to India. After their advent Southern civilisation could not have declined, and the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki is no doubt a product of Āryan culture when it was flourishing on Indian soil. Even at the time of Solomon (c. 975 B.C.) South India maintained commercial connections with the Mediterranean countries and Babylonia, and there was a regular demand from them for her teak, sandal, pearls, muslins, peacocks and pepper which were exported from Ophir and supplied to the West by Phoenicians. The trade in peacocks and pepper went from Malabar through its ancient seaport Kodungallur, which is identified with Musiris of the Greeks. A race that carried on such extensive trade with the far West in ancient times could not have been strangers to civilisation and culture. Before these unimpeachable evidences Vālmīki's picture of S.India can hardly be credited with any historical value, and must be regarded as a figment of the poet's imagination and the outcome of his readiness to credit fantastic stories, which he shared with ancient Indian writers.

Coming to the evidence available in the languages of S.India, we may take the Tamil, whose literature in point of antiquity and extent has precedence over those of

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~~2. History of Kerala by K. R. Padmanabha Menon. Vol. I. p.~~

L. Identified with supāra near Bombay or Bēpur near Calicut.



others. If there was any tradition about the Aryan invasion of S.India, it is extremely unlikely that no trace of it could be found in the early classical literature of Tamil. The uncertainty and the absence of uniformity of opinion among scholars about the dates of works like Tolkāppiyam (a work on grammar, social history, ethics, etc) and other Sangam works make it rather difficult to arrive at the earliest limit of the classical period in Tamil Literature. We may with some show of reason fix as their earliest possible date the 4th century B.C., when we have definite historical evidence about S.Indian Kingdoms and their activities.

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1. Some are inclined to date it anterior to Pāṇini (7-5 Cent.B.C.) as it does not refer to the latter, but mentions 'Aindram' the first Sanskrit work on grammar.( Terra Tamilica,quoted in 'Tamil India' by Mr.S.P.Pillay,p.68.)

2. They cover a long period. The number of works included under this category is widely exaggerated; and the inference of Mr.K.N.S. Pillay who has subjected them to a critical scrutiny, that the Sangam theory owes its origin to the imagination of the commentators, has something to be said in its favour - 'Chronology of the Early Tamils'. vide p.196

3. (a) Megasthenes ~~xxx~~ the Greek Ambassador in the Court of Chandragupta (256 B.C.) in his account makes mention of S.Indian Kingdoms, which again find a place in Asoka's Edicts and Pāṇini's grammar.( Cambridge History of India, Vol.V,Chap.XXIV by Dr.L.D.Barnett.p.597.).

(b) A Pāṇḍyan King sent an embassy to Augustus Caesar in 22 B.C.: Antiquities of India, by Dr.L.D.Barnett, p.42.



Agastya legend.

A discussion of this topic brings us to another  
 1. legendary figure, the sage Agastya, who according to tradition was the forerunner of Aryan culture in the Tamil Land, as Parāsurāma was in Malabar. If Rāma is taken as the Āryan conqueror, it is not quite clear what place should be assigned to Agastya, whose credentials for the foremost rank among the Āryan explorers of S.India are of equal if not of superior value and importance. This mythical Magician's personality is  
 2. so buried in impossible and incredible legends that the extrication of the man from the whirlpool of tradition is by no means an easy task. According to one account he lived  
 3. four centuries before Rāma's time. In the Rāmāyāṇa there is mentioned a hermit sage named Agastya, who is said to have been visited by Rāma in his hermitage near Citrakūṭa, and who is probably the same as the Agastya of Tamil legend, though the latter is always believed to have made his home at Podiyil, near Travancore, and to be still living there. The author of

- 1.(a) According to one school his Aryan pedigree is doubtful as the island of Agatty on the Malabar Coast is supposed to be his birth place. See Tamil India, by M.S.Purnalingam Pillay.p.40.
- (b.) Another school derives the name from Akatti, a kind of tree, as they believe that his hermitage was surrounded by these trees on the analogy of the name Bādarāyaṇa for Vyāsa, who lived in a forest of Badarams.
- (c) Dr.Barnett ascribes to this legend a later origin.(Cambridge History of India, p.596).
2. His drinking of the ocean and kicking down the high Vindhya mountains look like feats of magic performed by experts in Indrajālam.
3. History of the Tamils by P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar.p.55.



the Tolkāppiyam, who according to some was a disciple of Agastya,<sup>1.</sup> does not mention his guru in his work, a fact which speaks for itself. It is obvious that the legend came later, or we have to<sup>2.</sup> assume at least two Agastyas. As a writer his versatility and the quantity of his output are as incredible as his superhuman performances already referred to. He was also a religious leader, and is looked upon with reverence in S.India and Jāva, where the inhabitants claim him as the founder of Śaivism. In the Tamil land he looks like the counterpart of Vyāsa in Sanskrit lore, and carries with him all the traditional glory of an institution rather than an individual. In the words of Mr. Siva Raja Pillay, "We have to take Agastya as neither more nor less than the embodiment of the ideal of the Āryan nation in their work of spreading their culture and knowledge to different countries of the South. This new school may urge that the Agastya legend need not be taken as treating of sober facts of history to be thrust into a strict chronological frame work but must be viewed as the expression of a generalised type of activity which<sup>3.</sup> the Āryan colonists have been pursuing in Southern regions".

The indigenous traditions and folklore of the other linguistic areas of S.India - viz. Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam - strongly support the position which an examination

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1. Agastya in the Tamil Land, by K.N. Siva Raja Pillay. p.34.

2. 96 works are assigned to him and they deal with all sorts of subjects, grammar, (Agattiyam), medicine, mysticism, magic, witchcraft.

3. Agastya in the Tamil Land. p.63.



of the Tamil literature suggests. In the literature of these there is a substantial substratum of Non-Āryan elements, which made itself felt in the continued fight between the champions of the 'pure language' and the 'mixture' waged throughout their literary history down to the present day. The Parāsurāma legend in respect of Malabar is decidedly a later invention, as some Keraṭōlpattis make no reference to it, nor have the travellers accounts up to the 16th century anything to say about it.

Vālmiki's epic primarily a literary work.

The scope of this chapter does not admit of further elaboration of the topic, nor is it necessary for our purposes. While it is not possible to prove the Āryan conquest of S. India on solid grounds, the theory loses much of its force if it is to be reared on the uncertain foundation of Vālmiki's epic, which is first and foremost a literary work. To attempt to read too much of historical matter into it is to misjudge its value as a work of art and give historical investigations a wrong lead. It is also equally unreasonable to assume that he was free from the influence of contemporary life and events or bias, to which all poets and artists are subject. It is quite probable that he wanted to paint the non-Āryans, whom he had no reason to love, in the blackest colours imaginable in his work,

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1. They on the other hand speak of a deluge when the whole West Coast was submerged in the ocean. Parāsurāma is supposed to have reclaimed the land from the ocean.



and he must be given the credit that is his due for having accomplished it admirably as a master craftsman. How far the other alternative, that as a poet he gave an airy nothing a local habitation and a name, deserves consideration we shall not attempt to discuss at this stage. For the present we will leave it at that and proceed to consider some other aspects of the question.

### Āryan superiority untenable.

The word 'invasion' implies superior strength on the part of the invaders. If Rāma was a typical example of Āryan strength and military skill and Rāvaṇa or Bāli of Dravidian prowess in war, there is no doubt that an impartial verdict will give the palm to the latter. The victory over Bāli does little credit to the victor, who appeared to be at his wit's end when his brother with the host of monkeys had to face the Bramhāstra of Indrajit, Rāvaṇa's son. Had it not been for the timely act of Hanumān on the advice of Jāmbavān<sup>1</sup> in securing the death-curing medicine to revive the prostrate army, the story would have come to end at that juncture only. The methods employed by the monkeys at the instance of Rāma or rather, we may say at the advice of Vibhīṣaṇa - to prevent the continuance of the sacrifice of Rāvaṇa's son (Indrajit) which would have given him invincible power, are such as would make modern dictators hesitate to adopt them. Either Vālmiki in spite of himself was constrained to pay homage to the

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1. Mṛtasanjivini



superior skill of Rama's enemy in battle or exaggerate it to enhance the glory of his hero, or the epic is a pure myth, having nothing to do with the Aryan - Dravidian problem. The only achievement that could be assigned to Rāma's credit, barring his juvenile encounter with Tātaka in the company of Viśwāmitra, is the discomfiture of Khara and his followers. Judging it from a purely human standpoint, it must be deemed a miracle, or the Rākṣasa chieftain and his fourteen thousand strong army were the victims of a bomb-like explosion and lost their lives without having a chance to defend themselves. But the question may be asked, what happened to this extraordinary weapon when Indrajit brought disaster on them with his equally formidable bomb-shell. These are of course considerations which go deep into the internal structure of the epic, and are not germane to our present discussion.

Leaving the field of war, we shall proceed to enquire whether the assumed Aryan superiority has any support in the history and nature of cultural development of S. India. We have already seen that the earliest South Indian literature is an indigenous growth and mainly free from Aryan influence. In the field of religion, Prof. Seshagiri Sastriar, a leading champion of the theory of Aryan influence upon the South, admits that the Hindu religion in its post-Vedic phases ~~was~~<sup>1.</sup> was profoundly moulded by Dravidian influences. Both Saivism and the Mother Cult with their innumerable superstitions and occult practices were incorporated into the

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1. Dravidian India. p.94



Āryan creed and emerged as a new Sakti Cult infusing more vigour and variety into the original faith. South Indian Gods also were admitted into the Āryan Pantheon, and given new names and titles as insignia of their transformation.<sup>1.</sup> The religious formula Nama's Siva's,<sup>2.</sup> according to some supporters of these views, was originally Dravidian, in a Sanskritised garb. It must be admitted that its use as a personal name is restricted to the Dravidian area; but this proves little as to its origin. The simple South Indian conception of the Mother deity as a symbol of fertility and power seems to have inspired the Āryan genius for assimilation more than any other idea, and the countless aspects it assumed as a result of the fusion of the Dravidian and Āryan cultures have an illuminating history.<sup>3</sup> To quote Mr. A. K. Coomaraswamy.

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1. The S. Indian Murugan, who has two wives according to Tamilian tradition, was identified with Subrahmanya, who is Commander-in-Chief (Sēnāni) of the army of Dēvas and is a bachelor (Kumārān) in Āryan mythology; The same applies to Arumugan (Gaṇapati) and Ayyanār (Sāsta). The Malayūli God Vēttakkaran (Hunter God) underwent a similar metamorphosis. He managed to retain his name, but has lost his original independence, having become a minor deity attached to the circle of Śiva in connection with the legend of the latter's appearance to Arjuna in the guise of a Kīrāta.

2. Mr. Purnalingam Pillay fancifully explains its etymology in the following way: Nama = ours, Civa ayam = the throng of Śiva devotees. Tamil India, p. 59.

3. The primeval Dravidian Mother Goddess represents an abstract ideal. Her transformation as partner in the trinities seems to be the result of Āryan influence, which though it extended the range of the Mother's activities, at the same time deprived her of her independence, which idea still survives in the Marumakkattāyam system of Malabar and the words Taravattamma, the presiding woman of the Taravāda (House), and Manavi, of the same significance as in Tamil. Both these words have no suitable masculine equivalents in these languages. It is interesting to note in this connection that the Malabar 'Mother' is still the daughter of Śiva and not his Consort.



"Indeed if we recognise in the Dravidians a Southern race and in the Āryans a Northern race, it may well be argued that the victory of Kingly over tribal organisations, the gradual reception into orthodox religion of the phallus Cult and Mother Goddesses and the shift from abstract symbolism to anthropomorphic iconography in the period of theistic and Bhakti development, mark a final victory of the conquered over the conquerors (if there was a conquest at all). In particular the popular Dravidian element, must have played the major part in all that concerns the development and office of image worship, that is pūja as distinct from Yajña". This mingling or fusion was a long process and was the outcome of several centuries of contact. This cultural synthesis may have begun even in Vēdic times, when the Āryans adopted religious ideas and practices from the culture of the Indus Valley; and it became stronger with the decline of the Buddhist and Jain faiths, which resisted all alien interference, till the 2nd century A.D., when still the Brāhman caste system was rarely found in Dravidian society. Turning to fine arts,

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1. How far the linga-worship is identical with the phallus-cult is not quite clear. In the North it is definitely phallic in origin; but in the South, although it has sometimes preserved the same character, it is more often devoid of phallic semblance and significance (e.g. in the case of the Lingāyat cult). It is therefore possible that in the South two cults have become fused - one of them phallic in origin, and the other a worship of sacred stones of various shapes.

History of  
2. / Indian and Indonesian Art. p.5.



particularly Music and the dance, the Dravidian tradition still prevails in S.India. The words 'Ātṭam'<sup>1.</sup>, 'Kūttu'<sup>2.</sup>, 'Pāṭṭu'<sup>3.</sup>, and the cultural history behind them, with their numberless varieties, ranging from their crudest popular manifestations to the highest cultivated forms, show a long continuous development, in which the Āryan element is hardly distinguishable. The Sanskrit treatise on aesthetics, Nāṭyaśāstra, which by the way does not seem as old as is generally believed, has not been able to analyse them properly; and whenever the author treats of characteristically Southern forms of Art, he only shows that they do not conform to the general rules, and calls them 'dēśyabhēdas'. In the art of Music the 'dēśika' style possesses a distinct individuality. In the Yakṣagāna of the Kanarese people and the Kathakalī of the Malayālis the indigenous tradition has shown such an unusual degree of vitality that the Āryan element, when it came, was thoroughly transformed to suit the basic conceptions of the former. The Lord Natarāja, the Dravidian deity of the Art of Dance and his associations with Chidambaram suggest a predominately Dravidian basis for that conception. The development of this

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1. Generally means dance.

2. " " both drama and dance.

3. " " Song. In Malayālam the first two have a somewhat different connotation owing to vocal variations of the Art.

4. The criticism that has been advanced in recent times that the gesture language of Kathakalī does not adhere to the formulas of Nāṭyaśāstra is the outcome of an imperfect knowledge of the indigenous elements that have contributed to its growth.

x.x. Both are a kind of dance-dramas. Vide the author's articles on the subject in the Sunday Chronicle - Madras (1935)

5. E. B. Havell, *Himālayas in Indian Art*, p. 59, 60.

H. Krishna Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, p. 88, 89.



idea has gone beyond the domain of dance and entered those of sculpture and iconography, with the result that a regular philosophy has been evolved out of it, proclaiming the deity to be the symbol of cosmic creation and marking the victory of Śaivism over Vaiṣṇavism in the field of art.

My attempt in discussing the question of Āryan invasion and the assumed superiority of Āryan over Dravidian culture has been only to invite the attention of scholars who have been unduly emphasising Āryan predominance in Hindu culture to certain aspects of Dravidian civilisation and to point out that it is time to take into consideration the evidence which research in S.Indian literature, archeology<sup>1.</sup> and arts has disclosed in the interests of historical truth. Hindu culture is no doubt a composite product, to which both Āryan and Dravidian have contributed their share, as was necessary owing to their constant contact for centuries. As Mr.C.R.Reddy has rightly pointed out, "we Dravidians are proud to be shown as between Āryans and Dravidian: if there has been borrowing on the one hand, there has been giving on the other; that if we received, we also gave; that what assimilation there has been, has been mutual and not one-sided, and that the

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1. The Archeological Department has not yet attempted the excavations of the cities like Karūr, Musiri, Korkai, and Kāvēripattinam mentioned in Dravidian classics. They are bound to yield enormous material revealing many unknown facts of S. Indian History and civilisation. It is a pity that the historians have wasted their energies on speculations about a submerged continent Lemuria instead of attempting to know more about the land that still exists.



hindu civilisations is the common heritage of both". When we have the list of 'borrowings' constantly brought to our notice it is but fair to make an estimate of the 'givings' also. In the case of S.India, where the Dravidian tradition still lingers, in art and Literature and religion, it is obvious that the blending was through a process of peaceful penetration extending over several centuries and not through any aggressive conduct or military conquest.

### The Story.

The main events of the Rāmāyana story are well-known and need no repetition. A few comments on their organic relation with the plot of the story are bound to be interesting. Rāma is often taken as a model of Kingly virtue and paternal affection. It is not easy to substantiate this claim by an examination of his conduct at different stages. Take for instance his exile. The circumstances that culminated in his leaving his father's palace and throne for a period of 14 years do not show him in the best of lights. Infact it is difficult to fix the responsibility for this on anyone. When the arrangements for Rāma's Coronation were in progress Kaikeyi suddenly is reminded by Manthara of the two boons which the King gave her, in a critical situation when she saved his life. She chose that moment to ask for the fulfilment of the boons by which she insisted on Bharata's nomination as heir-apparent in place of Rāma, who was to go in exile for 14 years. This request was made when Bharata with his brother

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1. Introduction to the Dravidian India.p.IX.



was away on a visit to their maternal home. The old King was naturally upset by this unexpected turn of events, as a royal proclamation had already been issued announcing the Coronation of Rāma as Crown Prince, who was moreover his father's favourite. His infatuation for the young Queen deprived him of courage to resist her wish, while his affection for his eldest son made it impossible for him to accept such a request. His divided feelings, coupled with his old age, affected his health, which threatened to collapse. When the Prime Minister called on the King to consult him on certain important items connected with the coronation arrangements, the Rāja's indisposition became public. Rāma hastened to his father's chamber to enquire the cause of his ailment, which, as he came to know from Kaikēyi, was more mental than physical. Dasaratha, over-powered with sorrow, was unable to explain the complication that had arisen; and Kaikēyi saw in the King's silence her opportunity. Her case was presented with all the emphasis she could lay on the sacredness of the pledged word, and she demanded that Rāma should fulfil his father's promise. This<sup>1</sup> was too much even for the meek King. He denies her request;

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Both Vālmīki's epic and Adh:Rāmāyana agree in this :-

- 1.(a)'Thy fell request will I deny' - Griffith's translation of the Rāmāyan of Valmiki.p.388 Bk.II.
- (b) Conquered by a woman,deluded in mind,walking in an unrighteous path am I. Do thou confine me and take this Kingdom.(Adh:Rāmāyana Trans:Lala Baij Nath, p.34 - Verse 69).



but Rāma agrees to go. We may here pause to examine Rāma's decision. His father, who is personally concerned in the matter (of the boons), does not ask Rāma to do as Kaikeyi desires. On the other hand, he advises strong action on the part of Rāma, foreseeing mischief afoot. What about the safety of the country ? The old King is ill; and Rāma's brother, on whose behalf so much fuss had been made, is not on the spot to take charge of affairs in the absence of Rāma. To stage an exit at this juncture is to shirk one's responsibility as a member of the royal family. It may be argued that the cause of truth had been served by Rāma's action; but what about his public duty ?.. It is not sound policy to mix personal issues with the King's duties towards his country and his subjects, who were desirous to have Rāma as their Yuvarāja. Again, the wishes of the brother who is involved in the matter were not ascertained. It is natural for the intriguing mother to work for her son's accession, but the son may have his own views and need not necessarily agree to her machinations, which he did not approve as was shown by the sequel. It is over-shooting the mark to extol the virtues of truth when the person actually under obligation to maintain it was obviously not willing to fulfil his part of the transaction. Common sense would have shown to Rāma that the situation was the result of Court intrigue; and as an intelligent Prince he should have faced it with a counter-move by asking Kaikeyi to send for Bharata immediately, so



that the matter might be decided in his presence. This course has certain disadvantages too, if the other party takes a different view; but it is straight dealing. Brotherly affection also demands that Rāma should assist his brother in solving the problem that had arisen instead of taking it upon himself to settle it.

Further the wishes of the people cannot be easily brushed aside by a prince when they have given open expression to them, especially at a crisis when the old King on the verge of both mental and physical collapse is unable to give them security; nor should a devoted son think of leaving the father to the mercy of circumstances. When Rāma ultimately decided to go away, the people preferred to follow him and serve him instead of remaining at home. At the first halt he makes, he walks away with Sita and Lakṣmaṇa overnight when they were asleep. This is neither duty nor propriety, but deceit or moral cowardice, which hardly befits a hero.<sup>1</sup> It looks as if Rama had some other motive in going to the forest, and would have left in any case, even if Kaikeyi had not intervened. The whole episode in Rāmāyaṇa shows Bharata in shining colours, for he takes his mother to task for her unedifying conduct on his behalf and stands out as a supreme example of brotherly affection and self-sacrifice.

It is argued that Rāma was an incarnation of Viṣṇu, for the purpose of the annihilation of Rāvaṇa and his race, and that if advantage had not been taken of Kaikeyi's

1. The incongruity of the position is rendered more glaring when in Uttara Rāmāyaṇa Rāma discards Sita on the ground of popular rumour affecting her reputation.



move for an exit from the palace, his mission would never have been fulfilled. The argument is too flimsy to deserve an answer. Once the divinity of Rāma is admitted, criticism has either to be at a standstill or to assume a different course. For a God, killing of a human being like Rāvaṇa is no difficult task. God is all-powerful, even in his human form, and can straightway challenge and destroy his enemy. That he has not done so betrays a confusion of thought or a blending of two conceptions in the personality of Rāma which makes it difficult to determine where the divinity begins and humanity ends.

Without his divine attributes, it is possible to look upon Rama as a man full of the spirit of adventure, desirous of exploring regions unknown and enjoying the thrills that new discoveries provide. For such a one the settled atmosphere of a Court with its time-honoured formalities and routine will have little or no attraction, while the prospect of adventures in a strange land is sure to be exciting. A few days in Viśwamitra's company have already shown what that kind of life means. It is also probable that he has heard from the old courtiers strange tales about Southern regions - Dandakāranya - and its inhabitants, who had nothing in common with his own

people, and among whom the kinsmen of Tātaka and Subāhu might

1. There is also the story about the flight of Dasaratha to the South to escape the ruthless persecution of Parāśurāma, the enemy of the Kings, when he found refuge in the caves of Jatāyu and Sampāti, two brother vultures. This event is sufficiently romantic to bring in its train a fund of stories along with the return of Dasaratha.



be found. The yearning for romance and adventure is considered to be a component part of the heroic mould even these days. Much greater must have been its appeal to popular imagination at the time of Vālmīki or Rāma. This trait by itself makes Rāma a loveable character and a fascinating personality. His weakness as a human being lies in the way in which he twisted the situation arising out of his step-mother's intrigue for his own purpose irrespective of other considerations. But his romantic enterprise more than counterbalances his error, which, when it came to be justified and explained away as being due to a divine medium, enhanced his glory, which Vālmīki immortalised in his epic and which enthroned him in the hearts of the Hindus as their idol and ideal.

### Bāli episode.

Rāma's encounter with Bāli the monkey chief and the circumstances that led to the death of the latter constitute another important episode in the epic, and as such deserve some comment. The two brothers Bāli and Sugrīva quarrel as a result of a misunderstanding arising out of a fight of Bāli with Māyāvi<sup>1</sup>. Sugrīva is banished from the Kingdom, as Bāli had reason to suspect his loyalty and affection Rāma sympathises with Sugrīva's plight, and promises to kill Bāli and to restore Sugrīva to the throne, while Sugrīva in return agrees to help Rāma in his search

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1. A demon, overpowered by Bāli he entered a cave, and Bāli followed him with his brother Sugrīva, who was asked to keep watch at the entrance and close it if blood came out of it after some time. Sugrīva did so. But Bāli came out of it after a year alive after killing the demon. When he found the entrance closed he burst it open by his strength, and thinking that Sugrīva had purposely done it, drove him away, appropriating all his possessions, including his wife.



for Sita and also in any other eventuality that might arise thereafter. Sugrīva is advised to challenge Bāli to a duel, in which Rāma aims an arrow from behind and kills Bāli. About the details of their quarrel all versions of Rāmāyana agree. In the A.R., however, an additional detail appears<sup>1.</sup>, which does not affect situation materially although it exonerates Sugrīva to a certain extent. We are concerned with the conduct of Rāma in killing Bāli not in open combat but by treachery. Foul play is against all canons of the duel. Even supposing that foul play ~~might~~ could be palliated on the ground of necessity, the argument does not apply in this case. Bāli before his death asks Rāma certain pertinent questions, expecting an explanation in justification of his conduct. A man might kill a beast for food which was a dire necessity, but the flesh of the monkey was not eaten, and even that excuse according to Bāli could not be cited in favour of Rāma, who appeared in saintly garb and was expected not to molest people unnecessarily. Rāma is

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1. According to<sup>the</sup> A.R. when Bāli entered the cave of the demon his instructions to Sugrīva were that if after some time milk came out that must be taken as a sign of death of the demon. If blood came, he must conclude that Bāli was dead, and then he should close the cave. Though it was the milk that came, it looked like blood through the demon's magic, and Sugrīva closed the entrance to the cave.



1.  
unable to answer Bālī directly, and indulges in sophistry, sermonising on the monkey King's vices and his right as the representative of Bharata to punish evil-doers in realms belonging to the line of Ikswāku. 2.  
Rāma's claim to speak or do as the plenipotentiary of Bharata, whom he did not even meet or take leave of before he left Ayōdhya, is the height of deceit, which is by the way quite in keeping with his treacherous conduct towards Bālī. It passes one's comprehension how Kiskindhya, Bālī's Kingdom, could belong to Bharata. Neither he nor his ancestors had ever conquered it or had made any attempt in that direction. The line of Raghu had become famous through the exploits of that hero after whom the line is named, but nowhere is it stated that Bālī was one of the rulers who owed him allegiance. It is only covering one abominable act with another.

What after all is the heinous crime which Bālī committed and for which he was punished by "a deed so base" 3.  
Nobody could blame him for driving away Sugrīva, whose behaviour in the Māyāvī incident Bālī had every reason to suspect. A near relation of a King who had shown proof of infidelity is no

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1. Bālī asks :-

What fame from one thou hast not slain  
In front of battle canst thou gain  
Whose secret hand had laid me low  
When madly fighting my foe ?  
The Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmīki (Griffith's translation,  
Vol.IV.p.91.)

and concludes

.....defy.

The questioners with apt reply...p.97.Ibid.  
2.P,99,Ibid Later versions of Rāmāyaṇa have however omitted this argument of Rāma.

3. Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmīki.Griffith's translation.p.93,Vol,IV.



safe person to be kept within his palace. The ill feeling might at any time develop into an open revolt against his authority which the discontented person would surely endeavour to undermine. To banish such from the country is the recognised method among sovereigns. Works like Arthasāstra even recommend their extinction as a quite legitimate act within the purview of the Royal Code. Bāli's treatment of Sugrīva in that light should be regarded as lenient.

Another charge levelled against Bāli has reference to his conduct towards Ruma, Sugrīva's <sup>1.</sup> wife. There <sup>2.</sup> is only Rāma's testimony, which being one-sided cannot be relied on in this respect to show that Bāli had misbehaved towards Ruma. The proper person who could give unimpeachable evidence in the matter is Tāra, whose reference to that in her lament is in the mildest terms possible. This is what she says:-

"Ah Noble Vānar, doomed to pay  
The penalty of all to-day <sup>3.</sup>  
Sugrīva from his home expelled and Ruma  
from his arms withheld".

This can be only interpreted as referring to Ruma's separation from her husband. The banishment of one's own brother, whose character was suspected on the basis of a single incident, and who should have been given another chance or forgiven till fresh

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1. Some place Tāra in place of Ruma, assuming that Tāra was the original wife of Sugrīva. There is nothing in Vālmīki's epic to warrant this assumption. If there had been an episode like that in Tāra's life, she ought to have referred to that in her lament at Bāli's death, when she had a grown-up son, Angada, born of Bāli.

2. Rāmāyan of Vālmīki. p.100. Vol. IV.

3. Rāmāyan of Vālmīki. Vol. IV, p.111.



evidence of his lack of faith was forthcoming, must be deemed a sin according to Tāra, who also thinks that Ruma, who was innocent, should not have been withheld from Sugrīva, whose crime did not justify the punishment of Ruma also. From the point of view of Bāli it might be argued that in preventing Sugrīva from taking his wife with him he wanted to deprive his brother of the pleasures of life and condemn him to misery both physical and mental. While it can be conceded that this is too severe a punishment, it is doubtful whether it can be established as a sin<sup>1</sup> in the light in which Bāli's assumed misbehaviour is held. There is still another voice which clears Bāli's character of all its taint, and that is Hanumān's. Hanumān is one of those few loyal friends whom Sugrīva had during his exile. He can never be accused of any partiality towards Bāli. His testimony in the circumstances is doubly valuable.

In consoling Tāra says he :-

"And stay these tears, for thou art wise  
Our Lord the King is doomed to die  
On whom ten million hearts rely  
Kind, liberal, patient, true and just  
Was he in whom they place their trust  
And now he seeks the land of those  
Who for the right subdue their foes"<sup>2</sup>.

This praise, coming as it does from a partisan of Sugrīva, cannot be an exaggeration, but is a sincere homage to Bāli's greatness.

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1. Bāli's behaviour dwindles into insignificance when compared to Sugrīva's who during the absence of Bāli in the cave and after his death made Tāra his wife - we have the testimony of Angadān (Bāli's son) for this - p.463 Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, (1915) (p.162 A.R.) Rāma seems to have condoned it.

2. Rāmāyan of Vālmiki. Vol.IV.p.113-114.



Hanumān, who is purity and devotion incarnate, is fully alive to the deep tragedy that overtook the career of a magnanimous soul whose only weakness was an excessive consciousness of personal injury. In the light of this testimony, willingly <sup>to</sup> tendered by Hanumān despite his personal attachment/Sugrīva, it is unfair to accuse Bālī of misconduct. In any case, it is not free from doubt, and Bālī has every right to have the benefit of that doubt.

The whole episode is tragic in the extreme; and when we compare the speeches of Bālī and Rāma, which the Ādikavi has put in the mouth of these two characters, it is impossible not to be struck by the difference in their tone and sentiments. There is more nobility and pathos in the last utterance of Bālī than in that of Rāma, who evades direct answers to the points raised by the Monkey Chief and attempts a laboured <sup>1.</sup> disquisition on the rights of Kings, of which his victim seems to have a better knowledge. It reads like the cooked-up arguments of a counsel who has a weak case to defend with the difference that in the instance in point the counsel has a personal axe to grind.

From the point of view of human psychology and political intrigue it is easy to understand the line of thinking pursued by Rāma in his dealings with Bālī. In Sugrīva he found a fellow sufferer like himself, a victim of circumstances 1. The strange argument of a hunter's right to kill Monkeys and similar beasts is also advanced by Rāma. Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa vide P, 98, Vol. IV (Griffith).



over which he had no control. As adversity makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows, the two were naturally drawn towards each other to work out their own ends. Each needed the other's help, and in the circumstances in which they were placed there was no reason to suspect the bonafides of either. Though Bālī was decidedly more powerful than Sugrīva and could have managed what Rāma wanted more easily, he could not be expected to throw himself heart and soul into Rāma's affair like Sugrīva, to whom Rāma could dictate his terms. In the case of Bālī, Rāma must necessarily depend upon his good will, which he had reason to doubt, in view of the friendly relations that subsisted between<sup>1.</sup> the lord of Kiṣkindha and the lord of Lanka. After the compact with Sugrīva the seriousness of the situation dawned on Rāma. Bālī was no ordinary foe. His strength was superhuman, and as a fighter he possessed rare courage and will power. In his treatment of Sugrīva, his own brother, there was ample evidence of his revengeful spirit. It is quite conceivable that Rāma hesitated to face such a formidable hero. No wonder, that Sugrīva at first doubted Rāma's capacity to kill Bālī, the<sup>2.</sup> magnitude of whose prowess he had learned to his cost. Having

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1. Rāvaṇa's discomfiture at the hands of Bālī, who had the Rakṣasa King hanging on his tail for years through Nārada's mischief, made them depart as friends.

2. Rāma had to perform two feats - throwing the head of Dundubhi and cutting the seven palm trees at one stroke - to convince Sugrīva of his strength.



pledged his solemn word to Sugrīva, Rāma had to save his honour; and the only alternative left was to take Bālī by surprise, following the dictates of expediency rather than the canons of warfare. He was encouraged to do it by the fact that the use of bows and arrows, in which Rāma was proficient, was unknown to the Vānaras, who counted on their physical strength. Rāma's action is on a par with the political murders committed in various countries of the world in both ancient and modern times when differences of opinion occur between individuals and the King or the party in power.<sup>x.</sup>

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x. Modern dictatorial Europe (Germany, Russia and Italy) affords ample illustration of the systematic application of this principle.

(a) Mr.C.V.Vaidya's justification of Rāma's conduct on the basis of the sovereign rights of superior races to interfere in the cases of misrule among inferior races and the rules of hunting can hardly be accepted: (vide p.155-157, Riddle of Rāmāyana). Who is to decide the question of superiority? The noble sentiments to which Bālī gives expression in his last utterance would do credit to the most enlightened man of the present day.

(b) The theory of Talboys Wheeler, quoted by Mr.Vaidya, drawing a distinction between the Vedic Rāma of Ayōdhya and Rāma the linga worshipper of the South, is only the question of Rāma the God and Rāma the man in another form. To build a theory like that on the solitary instance of Rāma's founding a temple for Siva at Rāmēswaram, which according to some is an interpolation is to follow the scope of reason an undue range. There is more plausibility in making Siva a Rāma-worshipper on the basis of the A.R.



Though the disfiguring of Sūrpanakha occurs before the encounter with Bāli, I have chosen to discuss it at this stage, as the event has a more direct bearing on the subsequent development of the story. The Bāli episode is only an interlude, which has no direct relation with the main incident of the Epic, viz. the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. For this Sūrpanakha's incident is the immediate cause and provocation. We shall do well to take stock of the various details of the episode before we comment on them. Sūrpanakha, the sister of Rāvaṇa, meets Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa at Janasthāna<sup>1</sup>. she appears before them as a charming maiden and falls in love with Rāma, whom she requests straightway to take her as his wife. The request naturally embarrasses Rāma as Sīta his wife stands by his side. The two brothers, instead of sympathising with her display of a natural instinct, makes fun of her sentiments, indulging in a practical joke on her. She is tossed between them as if to provide amusement. Irritated by such a treatment, she decides on removing Sīta, who, she thinks, stands between her and her desire for Rāma. The seriousness involved in her attempt opens Rāma's eyes to the dangers of the situation, and at his instance Lakṣmaṇa in a bound prevents her from carrying out her object, disfiguring her at the same time. She swears vengeance and hastens to her cousins Khara and his brothers, who live in the neighbourhood.

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1. Lalita.



They offer battle with their fourteen thousand strong army, who perish in the fight. Thereupon she appeals to Rāvana, who is the supreme lord of Rākṣasas. To arouse Rāvana's interest, she slightly twists the story describing the extraordinary beauty of Sīta, and impresses upon Rāvana that it was her idea to present such a lovely woman to him, that brought ~~her~~ misfortune upon her. The champion of the Rākṣasas takes up the cause, inspired by vengeance as well as the desire to possess Sita, and soon arrives in the guise of an ascetic at Janasthāna with his clever accomplice Mārīca. Thus the two principal heroes of the epic are brought face to face for the first time, and in the first round Rāvana scores, flying to his abode with Sīta.

The conduct of the two may now be examined. In dealing with a woman of the Rākṣasa race as Rāma has done, he has disregarded all conventions of chivalry, causing the gravest injury to the honour of that race, and Rāvana as their champion has every right to interfere. In this case there is sufficient provocation. Profession of love by Sūrpanakha is but a natural instinct, and her move can by no means be regarded as improper. If her conduct borders on immodesty, it must be remembered at the same time that she is a denizen of the forest and cannot be expected to know the code of behaviour obtained among sophisticated folk. Her forward nature on the other hand has an element of daring innocence which is after all not so despicable. As we do not hear from Rāmāyana about her husband, we have to presume that



she was an unmarried woman at the time. In that case her advances must be deemed quite legitimate, or at any rate do not deserve blame. Even assuming, that her lack of modesty was punished by her disfigurement, the punishment is far out of proportion to her supposed crime. The personal safety of Sita demanded that Sūrpanakha must be kept out of the way, but there are evidently better methods of accomplishing that. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa or any one of them could easily overpower her and bring her to her senses. The argument is often advanced that Rāma should have killed her forthwith for her improper advances, and that he refrained from it from a sense of Āryan Dharma which never permitted the killing of a woman. The plea comes with ill grace from those who pass off without comment the death of Tātaka, which was deliberately planned by Viśwāmitra, who had the willing co-operation of Rāma in that venture. It is also sometimes held that it was to save Sūrpanakha from the consequences of her excessive passion that Rāma thought of deformity as a deterrant punishment to her. This is a strange contention which approves of punishment in anticipation of a possible crime. We might as well suggest that if Rāma was to embark on a campaign of reform, he might more profitably have carried out his ideas in his own family, where there were already instances requiring such summary treatment.

Now turn for a moment to Rāmaṇa. He evidently believed in the maxim "an eye for an eye". For a woman disgraced among them he decided to have another from the enemy's camp. If one snatched like that is nearer to the heart of the enemy, so



much the better; and so Sītā became his victim. A stern sense of logic seems to be the motive power behind his action. It was open to him to handle Sītā after the fashion of Rāma; but he preferred a better course, which marks him out as more chivalrous in his behaviour towards woman. If chivalry is a sign of refinement, he shews more evidence of it than Rāma. He takes Sītā to his palace, and tries the milder method of persuasion to bring her round. In any case his behaviour is not open to the objections to which that of Rāma is open, nor is there any need to justify it on the ground of the Rākṣasa<sup>1</sup> custom of abduction of women before marriage.

Mr. Vaidya's suggestion would have been right if the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa had been an independent event having no connection with the Sūrpanakha episode, and if it was a part of a general campaign organised by the Lord of Lanka for the acquisition of fair women for his personal use. It does not appear from the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, or for that matter from any other version of it, that Rāvaṇa had any such intention. Nor does he seem to have heard of Sītā and her<sup>2</sup> exceptional charms before Sūrpanakha approached him with her tale of woe. It is not in the course of wanderings in the pursuit of women that he arrives at the hermitage of Rāma. His intervention has been no doubt provoked, and cannot be in any sense deemed unjustifiable. It is necessary to defend Rāvaṇa's

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1. The riddle of Rāmāyaṇa by C.V. Vaidya. p.148.

2. In Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa, Rāvaṇa is mentioned as one of the Kings who attempted to bend the divine bow to win the hand of Sītā. Bhavabhūti for dramatic purposes makes use of this detail in his drama 'Jānakī Parināyam'.



action, in view of the assumption that he is a bad character and the Rākṣasas, uncivilised beings. How far the Rākṣasas deserved such a criticism will be answered in the course of this chapter. Before that we have to anticipate another argument which disputes Rāvaṇa's claims to be a hero, as he attempted to steal away Sītā rather than challenge Rāma for his conduct towards Śūrpanakha. The question is one of procedure, and as such does not affect the main issue. Rāvaṇa's right to interfere undoubtedly stands on firm grounds. Whether that should have taken the form of abduction or an open challenge to conflict is a matter of tactics which are resorted to for the attainment of one's object. As has already been pointed out, the idea of one woman for another is the main consideration. In the event of a fight one cannot be sure of its result, and the chief object stands only a doubtful chance of being realised in such a contingency. So Rāvaṇa, artful as he was, thought of securing his principal object first and facing the consequences of it later. A fight, in any case, was inevitable. Rāma was not likely to consider the loss of his wife with indifference, and was sure to deal with the offender in the proper way. From the point of view of Rāvaṇa his enemy should not have an easy time over it, while he could in the meanwhile prepare for the conflict. Viewed from any standpoint, Rāvaṇa's conduct has better justification than that of Rāma. When ultimately the crisis came and the enemy challenged him, Rāvaṇa stood up and fought with all his might to the last. The idea of evading



it was never in his mind. In this connection it may <sup>be</sup> worthwhile to notice another charge that is generally levelled against Rāvana without sufficient evidence. His weakness for women is often pointed out as one of his many vices. But instances in <sup>1.</sup> Purāṇas to substantiate this are few and far between. When he conquered Indra, it is said that Urvasi and other celestial nymphs were forcibly taken away by him to his palace. But no visitor to Lanka bears testimony to this fact. We hear only of one woman as his legitimate wife and queen. The maintenance of a harem was a prevailing custom among Kings. Its size or strength varied according to the importance of the King. Probably <sup>2.</sup> Rāvana too had a similar institution; but in that respect he <sup>3.</sup> is in good company.

<sup>4.</sup>

The episode in which Rāvana uses force against Rambha reflects more discredit on herself and the abode of Indra, where she is a 'chartered libertine', than on Rāvana, who only sought to exercise a right which other heroes who had access to heaven enjoyed. Indra in mythology rules over a realm where pursuit of pleasure is cultivated as a fine art along with other

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1. There is one instance in which Rambha figures.

2. Rūpayauvana-sampannā

Rāvaṇasya Varastriyaḥ - Perhaps these lines of Vālmīki refer to Rāvana's harem, quoted on p.104 of the Riddle of Rāmāyana.

3. The greatest sinner in this respect is Kṛiṣṇa, whose harem was 16000 strong.

4. Once Rāvana was halting in the valley of Kailāsa when Rambha passed that way to keep an appointment with Kubēra, the Lord Chancellor of heaven. Rāvana interposed asking her to keep company with him on that day. She declined on the ground of her engagement with Kubēra, whereupon Rāvana used force and Rambha cursed him to meet his death through a woman. Rāvana's infatuation for Sita and his consequent downfall are traced to this curse of Rambha.



fine arts, viz. music and dance, and nymphs like Urvasi and  
 1. Rambha play the leading role in the whole drama. They  
 2. entertained heroes both of this world as well as the other,  
 who had rendered service to the Dēvas, and were ready to  
 offer their company also to them. It is stated in the  
 Purāṇas that this incident with Rambha occurred when Rāvaṇa  
 was young and may be regarded as a 'youthful indiscretion'.  
 None therefore will blame Rāvaṇa too severely for this act.  
 His character indeed commands greater respect than that of  
 Indra, who made use of his nymphs for various purposes, and  
 contaminated the atmosphere of both heaven and earth, throwing  
 3. temptation in the way of even ascetics, not to speak of  
 vigorous worldly men like Rāvaṇa. Critics are often prepared  
 to pass Indra without notice, while they subject Rāvaṇa to  
 a deal of unfair criticism.

Rākṣasas: who were they ? Our observations on Rāvaṇa's  
 conduct take us to the wider subject of the origin and nature  
 of the Rākṣasa race, about whom much has been written by  
 4. various writers. Some try to make out that they were cannibals  
 and a barbarous race. But they are at the same time confronted

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1. There are two more in the group, Mēnaka and Tilōttama.
  2. There are several instances of such entertainments in Purāṇas. Purūravas and King Dasaratha are notable examples. The former was very much attached to Urvasi, who had to take birth on earth to please him.
  3. Viśwamitra and Nārāyaṇa are classical instances. Indra is always jealous of men performing austerities for a place in heaven. He sent Mēnaka to distract the attention of Viśwamitra engaged in penance which she disturbed twice. In the case of Nārāyaṇa, another ascetic, Urvasi took the place of Mēnaka. There are several such instances.
  4. Riddle of Rāmāyaṇa. p. 106.



with a problem in which they are obliged to reconcile their cannibalism with certain other statements about Rākṣasas, such as their beauty, their origin, their knowledge of Vedas, which testify to their refinement and culture. Apparently these theories about Rākṣasas are the result of a confusion of thought. Even taking the descriptions in Rāmāyaṇa as our basis, we find that they are mutually contradictory. Though Virādha, Kabandha and Rāvaṇa are all designated as Rākṣasas, we know from Rāmāyaṇa that the former two were cannibals, while the latter and his race were of a different type and had nothing in common with the others. Vālmīki's description of Lanka, the palace of Rāvaṇa, gives us the picture of a great centre of civilisation which was in no way inferior to that of H.India. There is therefore every reason to think that terms like Rākṣasa, Daitya, and Dānava conveyed originally a meaning which was quite different from what they were made to convey later. Mr.Pargiter's inference that they were originally men and their transformation into demons was a later development has plenty of mythological evidence in

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1. Vide the passage already quoted. (Note 2, p, 160)

2. Rāvaṇa is descended from the Sage Pulastya.

3. Rāvaṇa and his brother knew Vēdas and were religious (p.277, Ancient Indian Historical Tradition by F.E.Pargiter(1922). The hōma sacrifices performed by Rāvaṇa and his son Indrajit resemble the Vedic rituals very closely.

4. A.R.p.62.Ver:17-19 translation by Lala Baij Nath Vāl:Rāmāyaṇa.p.276.Griffith (1915)

5.v.Rāmāyaṇa.p,354.Ibid.

6. Ancient Indian Historical Tradition by Pargiter.p.277.



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its support.

### Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa.

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa is generally considered to be a part of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. It is however significant that the former does not contain any evidence of its relationship with the latter. Every Kāṇḍa concludes with a reference to the dialogue between Uma and Mahēswara. The reference is repeated verbatim at the end of every Kāṇḍa with the necessary change in their names. In the face of this fact its association with Brahmāṇḍam is a mystery. Either Adhyatmam had an independent existence, or the compiler of Brahmāṇḍam has incorporated it in

the bigger purāṇa for reason of his own. The nature of the Purāṇas

1. (a) It is worth while to quote the following passages from Fargiter's work on the subject. "These names, Dānava, Daitya etc. denoted people originally. Thus King Yayāti married Sarmistha, daughter of Vṛṣaparvan, who was King of the Dānavas and a Daitya. Bhīma killed the Rākṣasa Chief Hidimba and had by his sister Hidimbi a son Ghatōtkaca who was King of the Rākṣasas and took part in the Bharata battle..... Similarly the Rākṣasas in the story of Rāma were the inhabitants of Ceylon and the Godavari Valley..... As these people were originally enemies, these names turned to mean alien and hated, hostile or savage men..... This abusive use led to the attribution of evil characteristics to such people, who were then described as demonic beings and so these terms approximated to Asura in meaning. (Ancient Historical Tradition. p. 290-291).

(b) It may also be noted in this connection that the Jaina version of Rāmāyaṇa which has been rendered into Kanarese makes no mention of Rākṣasas but only of Vidyādhara. History of Kanarese Literature by Rice. vide p. 34.

2. Ityadhyātmārāmāyaṇe, - Umamahēswara Samvāde.  
Mr. C. R. S. Iyengar adds the following note about A.R. "Believed to be a part of Brahmāṇḍa. But the internal evidence shows that it is related by Viśvāmitra. Bhaviṣyaḥ Purāṇa (111-19) says that Lord Saṅkara having thus gratified the wish of Rāmānanda vanished from the place. Later the holy man sought Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and served him faithfully for 12 years subsisting solely on milk. The master enjoined him to compose the work known later on as A.R. "Neither Vālmīki or Vyāsa can be claimed to be its author.

(Introduction to his translation of the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, p. 76.)



suggests this inference as a possibility. They look like compilations, like modern encyclopaedias, in which information of all kinds was gathered for the edification of the votaries<sup>1</sup> of particular religious cults that existed in Hindu Society. The Vaisnavic bias of A.R. is patent enough. If B.P. was compiled after A.R., its inclusion in the former for Vaisnavic propaganda was a necessity. If it was done later, the omission could have been supplied in a revised edition of B.H. In any case it is difficult to believe that A.R., which is a solid work complete in design and execution, formed part of another work.

The genesis of the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam in Malayālam.

Here again we have to begin with a legend. Once a Brāhmaṇa Sanyāsin presented a Mss. copy of the original Adhyātma<sup>2</sup> written in Telugu (according to one version Nāgarī) script to an Ampalaṇḍa Rāja, who wished to have it transcribed into Malayālam script so that he might read the rare work. Mepattur Bhaṭṭatiri, who happened to be at the palace at the time, was asked by the Rāja to do the transcription or arrange for it. Since Mepattur did not know Telugu, Eṣuttaccan was<sup>3</sup> approached for the purpose, as he was conversant with all the

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1. Otherwise the repetition of the same subject matter in different Purāṇas can hardly be explained.

2. The story is that the Mss. was brought from Benares. Why the Brāhmaṇa should go all the way to Benares to get a telugu Mss. is not easy to understand. Perhaps he might have secured it on his return from Benares via Telugu districts.

3. Another version says Bhaṭṭatiri, who was on friendly terms with the Rāja, took Eṣuttaccan to Ambalapuṣa and introduced him to the Rāja, who then personally asked our poet to transcribe the work into Malayālam script. That is however a matter of detail.



Dravidian scripts. In the course of its transcription the work was rendered into Malayālam verse by the poet. Both the Rāja and Bhattatiri were immensely pleased with Eṣuttaccan's work, the transcription and the Malayālam version. The story goes on further to say that as reward for Eṣuttaccan's meritorious labour all the Cakkāla Nāyars within the territory of Ampalapuzha were exempted from the oil-mongering business and all their machines were removed. The sequel of the story, it must be confessed, transforms it into an incredible legend. That a man of Eṣuttaccan's wide outlook and temperament would have agreed to a proposition to deprive thousands of his fellow-<sup>men</sup> being of their means of livelihood and, still more, that he would ever think of his birth in a particular clan as a stigma, is really hard to believe.

There is still another story. The author of the original Adhyātman again a Brāhman, was feeling unhappy as his work was not having the recognition which according to him was its due. In the course of his wanderings he met a Gandharva at Gōkarnam, and sought his advice as to what he should do to popularise his work. The Gandharva directed the

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1. The implication is that Eṣuttaccan belonged to the oil monger clan (Cakkāla Nāyar), one of the subdivisions of the Nayar Community. Oilmongering was then apparently not considered to be an honourable profession.

2. Eṣuttaccan's humility makes him proclaim that he is in the forefront of the ignorant: page 3 of Adhyātman: Ajñanināmādyanāyu Llōruṇān.

3. A place in S. Kanara once considered to be the Northern boundary of Kōrala.



brahmana to another person who happened to be on the spot at the time. The mysterious person who, according to tradition, the great sage Vyāsa himself, who was not disposed to forgive the Gandharva for this unexpected inroad on his privacy and cursed him to be born as a man. The Gandharva therefore was reborn<sup>1.</sup> as Eṣuttacean later. Since he knew the author of Adhyātman in his previous existence, Eṣuttacean thought to give to him some importance by choosing his work as the basis of his Malayālam rendering.

The two stories, though vying with one another in respect of their improbability, nevertheless suggest certain possibilities, viz. that Eṣuttacean was conversant with the other branches of the Dravidian family of languages, that Adhyātman was first introduced probably from Telugu districts into Malabar at the time of Eṣuttacean, and that Eṣuttacean's work was considered to be superior to the original. The last is, as scholars will admit, not a possibility but an unquestionable fact, which we will show in the course of the chapter. The stories also seek to answer the question why Eṣuttacean ignored the great epic of Vālmiki, which is by far superior to Adhyātman in point of literary merit, when he chose to bring out a Rāmāyaṇa in Malayālam. The Ampalapuṣa legend was not convincing enough as

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1. The story unfortunately does not proceed to tell what happened to the Adhyātman or its poor author, whose begging expedition was primarily responsible for this curse on the Gandharva.



an explanation for his preference of Adhyatman; and his admirers might hence have been led to provide another through an invention of their own. While we are prepared to sympathise with the sentiments of his champions, we can hardly give them credit for an intimate knowledge of his work. Mention is made of Vālmīki's name at the very commencement of Eṣuttaccan's work, in which the blessings of the "Prince of poets" are invoked<sup>1.</sup> by the 'Prince of Malayālam poets'. The knowledge that another<sup>2.</sup> great poet had already accomplished the task of writing a malayālam rendering of Vālmīki's epic might have also induced him to prefer another version of the story of Rāma. We have already considered at length in chapter II the influences of the age which might have determined the choice of his theme. The preamble to his work also confirms our view. Vālmīki sang the glories of a great hero. The age of Eṣuttaccan was no doubt different from that of the early poet, and his message had to be suitably amended. We have no exact idea of the circumstances or the environment in which Vālmīki conceived his story. The dominant note of his epic however points to an heroic age that revelled in the romance of war consequent upon the unsettled state of society and looked upon its heroes as objects, for emulation. Eṣuttaccan, as we have seen, lived in a period that was tired of war and its horrors, and was badly

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1. Vālmīki Kavīśreṣṭhānākiya Mahāmuni Tānmaṣavaramantarikeppōḷum Vannikunnēn.

2. Kaṇṇaśśan.



in need of a spiritual message to soothe the agony of the human soul that had realised the futility of ravage, devastation and mutual annihilation. The theme of Adhyātma suited him and his age, and so he made the choice. The following lines proclaim the object which he had in view in composing his work, viz. the mental peace of his brethren.

'Adhyātma pradīpakam atyantam rahasyam i -  
Tadyātmārāmāyaṇam Mrtyuśāśanaprōktam  
Adhyānam caitiṭum Martyajānmikakēttām  
Muktisiddhikumāsannighāmiḥ jannamKonde

"Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam revealed by Śiva is the most secret as it expounds the Adhyātma (osoteric) knowledge. Men who recite it are sure to attain salvation in this birth". The inspiration behind his message was not merely one of religious enthusiasm, but is characteristic of a poet-seer who gave his readers through the magic of his words aesthetic pleasure first and salvation later. The process made them doubly prepared for the message. In this respect he is on the same plane as Kaṁbar in Tamil and Tulsidas in Hindi. Neither of these poets thought of translating into his own language the original epic word by word. The epic of Vālmīki along with the vast multitude of connected legends that had gathered round the personality of Rāma constituted the foundation on which they raised their superstructure, of which the design and finish were entirely theirs. Eṣuttaccan also is a follower of the same method, with the difference that he based his work on Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam instead of on Vālmīki's epic. An original genius such as he



could hardly be bound down by any other work, and he has taken every liberty with the theme to make his venture a first class production. Sometimes we find him closely following the original, especially when enunciating a religious doctrine. But at other times we notice his readiness to illuminate the dark corners of the original, elucidate what is obscure in the latter or introduce new ideas to paint a situation in the new light. In doing this he has made ample use of his knowledge of other works on Rāmāyaṇa<sup>1</sup>. The example of his predecessor must have encouraged him to pursue an independent course like this. A story like Rāma's never loses its charm in retelling. On the contrary, it gathers new lustre and beauty, like purified gold, from every attempt at recounting it.

#### Eṣuttaccan's epic.

We will now proceed to examine a few instances to show how Eṣuttaccan handles his theme and indicate certain characteristics of his poetry.

One can hardly read two pages in Eṣuttaccan's work before he is struck by the devotional fervour of the poet. The mere mention of Rāma immediately conjures up the figure of his idol before him, and a series of epithets follows to transform into words what the poet experiences in his mind. If there is an occasion for a praise of the hero, the poet identifies himself completely with the character who does it

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1. For example, Kannassan's Rāmāyaṇam, Vālmīki's epic, Rāmāyaṇa campu, etc.



and makes it as elaborate as possible. All the divine attributes which proclaim Rāma as the Supreme Being, along with a review of his achievements and graces, particularly the God's personal interest in his devotees, find a place in it. There is a remarkable peculiarity about these praises or stotras. In A.R. <sup>112</sup>every alternate page contains a stotra. Although the God to be praised is the same and his attributes also are more or less similar, Ezuttaccan's stotras are never monotonous, owing to his amazing command over the vocabulary and the intensity of his emotional fervour. The reader never loses sight of Rāma's personality, his divinemission, and the immensity of his compassion and kindness to his Bhaktas. The original Adhyātmawas also intended to sing the glory of Rāma as a God, but the reader never derives so lively and abiding an impression of this as he does from Ezuttaccan's work. The poet's own personal feelings permeate every line of the stōtras in his work, which as pen-pictures and lyrical compositions have few parallels either in Malayālam literature or in other literature of the world.

### Ezuttaccan's Rāma.

The character of the hero is not the same as we find it in the original Adhyātmam, which gives us the picture of a divinity who preaches his own importance in season and out of season, but lamentably fails as a human being. Whenever the author of A.R. <sup>113</sup>attempts to introduce human elements into it, he goes to the other extreme and makes the character



grotesque. Eṣuttaccan's conception is different. His hero is an ideal for gods as well as for men. If he is the most compassionate and powerful of gods, he is also the most far-sighted, deep and magnanimous of men. Eṣuttaccan does not approve of the original author's attempt to paint Rāma's childhood in the usual way of the poets. The child Rāma in the original Adhyātmam runs away from his father when he calls him, and he is quicker than his mother. He comes and goes as he likes.<sup>1.</sup> It is by such pranks that he pleases his parents. Eṣuttaccan's boy Rāma pleases them by his boyish liveliness, engrossing beauty, engaging looks, sweet smiles,<sup>2.</sup> infantile steps and various other attractive movements. He endears himself not only to Dasaratha and Kausalya, but also to his stepmothers and the people of the city. All the five<sup>3.</sup> senses derive pleasure from his sight. Eṣuttaccan wants to show that his boy Rāma was a god-child, a paragon of beauty and grace and perfection. To describe him as a ordinary child with all its frivolous pranks was according to our poet to deprive divine infancy of its dignity and charm. His<sup>4.</sup> description of Kausalya and her Sapatnī's during their pregnancy prepares the readers for this view of Rāma. They<sup>5.</sup> wore an appearance full of brilliance and majesty characteristics of the divine embryo ('bīja') they were bearing.

1. Translation by Lala Baij Nath. Verses 47-50. p.11.

2. A.R.(Mal.) p.3.

3. *എന്നിന്നു മിന്നിപ്പോന്നു നമുക്കു മുമ്പെങ്ങനെ*

4. The Sanskrit term by which the wives of the same person are called.

5. A.R.(Mal.) p.12 (1878).



As the hero grows, his godly dignity and grace ripen into equanimity of temper and princely behaviour, with an unerring devotion to the rules of public conduct prescribed by Śāstras. When Rāma and his brother are asked to go with Viśwāmītra, Eṣuttaccan takes care that they shall pay their respects to their parents and guru before they take leave<sup>1.</sup> of them. The same courteous behaviour is exhibited by Eṣuttaccan's Rāma when he greets the bow of Siva at the Court<sup>2.</sup> of Janaka with a salutation as a mark of respect for the name it bears.

In the encounter with Paraśurāma, Eṣuttaccan gives us a picture of Rāma which is different from what we find in either Vālmīki's epic or the original Adhyātma. When Vālmīki's Rāma hears the challenge of Paraśurāma, he "kept back the hot words that rise to his lips"<sup>3.</sup> The behaviour of Rāma in Adhyātmam is still more agitated, and he "angrily snatched away the Vaisṇava bow from his hand"<sup>4.</sup> (Paraśurāma's) Eṣuttaccan's Rāma first meets the challenge with a graceful smile and then addresses a few polite words whose hidden meaning is more poignant than the arrow that he subsequently handles.

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1. (a) A.R., (Mal.) Lines 2-3. p.21.

(b) The author of the original A.R. is not very particular about these details.

2. A.R. (Mal.) p.29.

3. C.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's translation of Vāl. Rāmāyaṇa. p.213

4. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa Trans: by L.B. Nath. Verse 15-16. p.22.



This is what he says:-

"If great and magnanimous men like you treat boys like me in this fashion, what safety have they ?

And how are they to perform their duty according to their tradition or dharma.

If once your worthy self desires a thing it meets no obstacle.

A blind<sup>1</sup> boy like me cannot be expected to fare well in Gunabandha<sup>2</sup> (the blending of Gunas) at any time. Though born of Kṣatriya race, I have no skill in archery.

I make no distinction between a friend and a foe<sup>3</sup>. Nor am I capable of killing<sup>4</sup> an enemy

Even the destroyer of Antakā<sup>4</sup> cannot go against your decision.

Still, please give me your bow

I shall try my hand at it

Do not be offended if I fail.

This is followed by a beautiful description of Rāma's infantile grace and demeanour, which defies translation and raises the satirical tone of the speech to its boiling point. The whole piece is a master-piece of irony, in which every word is like a shaft. Eṣuttaccan's skill in such compositions is unrivalled, and they abound in the pages of his Rāmāyana and M.Bh. This quality of his poetry makes his readers revert to it always with pleasure. It is entertaining and at the same time thoughtful. The more you read it the more you enjoy it. The description of it as 'Ālōcanāmṛta' fits it admirably, for like nectar it never palls on the palate. It is no wonder that Malayālis read his works daily as a matter of religious duty.

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1. Intellectually blind.

2. The poet uses Guna in two meanings, i, the string of the bow, 2, virtue or good quality.

3. This can be also interpreted philosophically.

4. Śiva, who killed Antaka, the God of death.



A similar occasion arises when Rāma meets Kaikeyi after the latter started her diabolical game on the eve of his Coronation. Vālmīki makes Rāma expound the virtues of filial dharma and renunciation and declare that he is capable of the highest sacrifice for the sake of his father whose obligations are as important as his own. Says Rāma:-

"I pray you to lay to your heart well that the hollow joys of life have no power over me and that I am as dispassionate as the sages that abide in the holy forest. I pray you remember carefully that I hold my life of value only so far as it serves to fulfil His Majesty's pleasure. Know I of any higher Dharma than to wait on the pleasure of my father and serve him in thought, word and deed"<sup>1</sup>

A.R. also sounds a similar note with a Rāma who feels sorrow at the turn of events, narrowing down the ethical issue to a matter of filial duty which is then elaborated :-

"I shall forsake Sita or Kausalya and even Kingdom. He who does his father's work without being told is the best of sons. The son who does his father's bidding is middling. He who does not do his father's bidding is not a son but a refuse of a son".<sup>2</sup>

Both the poets seek to paint Rāma in the most ideal colours possible. Eṣuttacean follows the original Adhyātman so far as it goes, and then gives a finishing touch by introducing the human element into the situation. It may be policy to preach idealism when you are unable to meet the intrigues of your adversary. But it is no sign of intelligence to pretend not to have grasped the real issue, and to let the enemy think that his stratagem has not been seen through. Eṣuttacean therefore prefaces Rāma's speech

1. Vāl: Rāmāyaṇa translation by C.R.S. verse 80, p.96.

A.R. (original translation by L.B. Nath, verse 60-61, p.34.



Rāma Mother! Crown Bharata.

I shall retire to the forest soon.  
 Why did not my father tell me that and why  
 does he feel sorry about it.  
 Bharata is as good at governing the country  
 as I am at discarding it  
 It is a strain to rule,  
 While it is easy to live the forest  
 My Mother is really partial towards me in  
 having asked me to take care of my body  
 alone!

This is turning the tables upon Kaikēyi, who could not be accused of excessive affection towards Rāma. The tone of his words outwardly indicated the utmost respect for Kaikēyi, but with an unmistakable sting implied exactly the opposite. On the first reading they appear like praise for the step-mother who had done Rāma the greatest injustice. The situation had already taken an undesirable turn. Kaikēyi, whose intrigue was patent enough, cleverly concealed the personal issue involved in her move under the cover of emphasis on the solemn obligations of the King and his eldest son Rāma, who was to fulfil them on the former's behalf. To resort to a counter strategy would disturb the internal harmony of the palace, and probably might lead to disastrous results. But it would have done little credit to Rāma's intelligence if he had left the impression that the bitter pill administered by Kaikēyi, though coated by her honeyed words, had been swallowed by him under the mistaken idea that it was sweet. Eṣuttaccan, therefore, saves Rāma from this predicament by making him pay Kaikēyi in her own coin with a mild rebuke that appears like praise and exposes

1. We find in this an echo of the idea contained in a line of the B. Campu "Mayipatati gariyan ambate pakṣapāṭa."



the fallacy of her attitude. The here is thus raised in our estimation both as a man and a god.

The Śūrpaṇakha episode in Eṣuttaccan's Rāmāyaṇam reveals a similar premeditated design. The original story has made it bad enough. Though the mutilation of her form was done by Lakṣmaṇa, both Vālmīki and the author of the original A.R. lay the responsibility for the act on Rāma. We have already offered our criticism on Rāma's conduct in this respect. Some of the later poets who have handled the matter also appear to have thought that Rāma's behaviour needed some justification, and have attempted several alterations in various details. Kambar paints Śūrpaṇakha as an extremely passionate woman desperately in love with Rāma and introduces a quite undignified conversation between her and Rāma. Though Kambar's motive is to drag the Rākṣasa woman to the lowest depths, which will justify Rāma's behaviour and correspondingly raise his hero in the estimation of his readers, he seems to forget that the very condescension of Rāma in talking to her in that vein affects his reputation too. During this interview Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa are not with Rāma. Enraged at her disappointment Śūrpaṇakha enters the hermitage to kill Sītā, when Lakṣmaṇa, watching the whole scene from the doors, rushes inside and

1.(a) "Let not the hideous wretch escape without a mark to mark her shape". Griffith's translation edited by M.N.Venkata Swami, p.301. (1915)

(b) Then by the order of Rāma taking hold of dagger and seizing her Lakṣmaṇa of great strength cut off her nose and ears. A.R. (original) p.72.

2. The part played by Kāmadēva in the life of young lovers is discussed in great detail on p.30-35 of Kamba Rāmāyaṇa Caritam (Mal.) by A.Raman Pillay.



disfigures her. Even after the disfigurement Kambar makes her stay and have another dialogue which is positively vulgar with Rāma, who then threatens even to kill her as he did Tātaka. Kambar's elaboration of the scene, though not very creditable to Rāma, nevertheless betrays his anxiety to find some justification for Rāma's conduct.

Tulsidās's description occupies comparatively a small space in his narrative. His unwillingness to make Rāma give the order to Lakṣmaṇa to perpetrate this brutality on Sūrpanakha is apparent. He therefore reduces it into a sign,<sup>1.</sup> but at the same time heightens the gravity of the act by sending her hands to Rāvana. The sign need not necessarily be for the inhuman treatment which was meted out to Sūrpanakha by Lakṣmaṇa in his indignation, and so Tulsidās wants to shield his hero under cover of that uncertainty.

Eṣuttaccan deals with the situation in a different way. His Rāma does not order Lakṣmaṇa or make a sign to him, but keeps the Rākṣasi at bay when she approaches Sīta in a menacing attitude. He also makes it plain that her conduct was due to her despair and disappointment at her blasted love.<sup>2.</sup> Though the change looks simple and insignificant, its effect on readers is no doubt immense. Eṣuttaccan's description of Surpanakha and her demeanour excites our pity rather than

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1. Raghu Rai seeing that Sīta was frightened made a sign to his brother - and Lakṣmaṇa with the greatest ease struck off her nose and ears; her hands he sent to Rāvana in defiance. (Growse's translation. p. 345)

2. A.R. (Mal:) p. 109. The Rākṣasi..... Approached Sīta dēvi in a menacing mood. Rāghavan with anxiety resisted her and kept her at bay. Seeing this Lakṣmaṇan rushed with his sword drawn from its sheath and cut her ears, breast and nose.



indignation; and when the situation reaches the climax the readers are impressed more with its tragic consummation than with any sense of disgust towards the behaviour of a voluptuous woman. Our poet never leaves the readers in doubt about the intensity and genuineness of her passion, which, as fate would have it, was bestowed on a wrong person and led to her ruin. It would therefore appear rather cruel if Rāma were to brush her aside and deal with her as if she were a wild beast. Eṣuttaccan therefore makes his Rāma face the situation as an inevitable but unfortunate incident which has to be overcome without much discredit to one's self, and relieves his hero of any personal responsibility in such a brutal act. Lakṣmaṇa's interference, in the light of the setting designed by our poet, appears as another unfortunate occurrence, which in the circumstances it was not possible to control, and was due to Lakṣmaṇa's excessive devotion to his brother. On the whole Rāma emerges out of it more honourably than he does in other versions of Rāmāyaṇa; and it has to be admitted that Eṣuttaccan has done greater justice to his hero than other poet-votaries of Rāma, whose excessive zeal has outrun their sense of propriety.

The episode also discloses the poet's profound sympathy for the weakness of human nature, which is apparent in his treatment of Kaikeyī and Rāvaṇa. Other poets pour out the most venomous abuse on these two characters, apparently for the glorification of their hero. Eṣuttaccan



exercises considerable restraint in the matter. Other characters are often allowed to say what they like about them, but his own references to them are couched in language that cannot be called excessive. We shall revert to this subject later.

In the Bāli-Sugrīva controversy also Eṣuttaccan does not exhibit any tendency to take sides with the brothers.  
<sup>1.</sup>  
 In the episode relating to Māyāvi which led to the misunderstanding between them, there is a minor detail introduced by our poet. When Bāli entered the cave pursuing the asura, his instruction to Sugrīva was to close the entrance when blood came and keep it open if milk appeared, the implication being that blood would come only if Bāli died and that in case the asura perished, it would be indicated by the appearance of milk. According to Sugrīva's testimony he saw blood and in closing the cave he was true to the instructions given to him. The magic of the asura which transformed milk into blood was a mystery which both were not aware of. Hence the misunderstanding. This detail, which is not found either in Vālmīki or the original A.R., is Eṣuttaccan's invention. It serves to clear the character of the brothers, whose ~~mis~~understanding and innocence are thus rendered more tragic.

In the Mal: A.R. Bāli is not directly accused of any improper conduct with Sugrīva's wife. Rāma's answer to his questions takes the form of a general hint that men who misbehave in their relations with daughters, sisters, brother's wives or daughters-in-law; who must be regarded as equals, are



evil-doers, and as he has assumed the role of the protector of  
 I.  
 Dharma, all such men come within the range of his mission. In  
 the original A.R.<sup>1</sup> a reference to Bāli's conduct towards  
 Sugrīva's wife is made. Our poet has omitted that. Perhaps  
 he felt that the argument was too weak, and has not sufficient  
 justification. Even the general charge that Bāli was an  
 evil-doer cannot be sustained; but in view of the position to  
 which Rāma was dragged by circumstances some such excuse had  
 to be improvised. But to base a general charge of evil-doing  
 on this instance, which is more an insinuation than a fact,  
 Eṣuttaccan seems to have thought it unjustifiable. It is  
 more dignified to put it in general terms, which might cause  
 Bāli, whose eventful life could have possibly given room for  
 such an indictment, to look inwards and repent if there had  
 been any fault on his side. It is also quite possible that  
 2.  
 the variations of this episode in different Rāmāyaṇās might  
 have induced our poet not to put undue reliance on this detail.

At the same time Eṣuttaccan takes care to  
 mention Bāli's immense power, which had made him forget  
 himself and pay scanty attention to the condition of his  
 brother, who after all was not despicable. Rāma's speech  
in the Mal:A.R. magnifies this weakness of Bāli, and it is this  
 I. Virtue. I Thou hast forcibly taken to wife thy younger  
 brother's wife. Therefore, O, thou denizen of the forest,  
 thou hast been killed by me. verse 62, p.93.

2. In Jaina Rāmāyaṇa Sugrīva is represented as the husband of  
 Tara, who was seduced by Sahajāti, who approached her in the  
 guise of her husband. There is no mention of Bāli in it; and  
 the fight is between the seducer of Tara and Sugrīva. This  
 setting of the story reminds us of the Ahalya episode in  
 Rāmāyaṇa.



trait of his character that impresses Eṣuttaccan's readers more than anything else.

Those who read the original A.R. feel very much disappointed that its author has disposed of the gigantic fight between the two brothers in a couple of lines, and that too as a mere statement of fact. Our poet has given us a vivid description of it in twenty four lines, which thrills the readers. A similar description is presented to the reader whenever a fight occurs in the story, which the author of the original A.R. dismisses summarily. Eṣuttaccan when writing the epic never forgets that the members of his community who were warriors by profession would welcome such passages and derive considerable intellectual satisfaction from them. Both his Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata have plenty of such descriptions, which in point of vividness and force are equalled only by the pen-pictures of his favourite deity.

The master-stroke of Eṣuttaccan in the delineation of Rāma's character appears when Rāvaṇa falls down dead on the battlefield. Vibhīṣaṇa exhibits sorrow at the death of his brother, and so do Mandōdari and other Rākṣasa women. It is a solemn occasion when the victor rejoices at the culmination of his prolonged struggle and anxiety, in glorious triumph. On the other side of the picture is the pathetic scene that witnesses the pangs of separation, destitution and destruction

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1. One such instance is Kharā's fight, which is described in detail by Eṣuttaccan. The Yuddhakāṇḍam is full of such descriptions.



felt by the surviving relations of the vanquished.

The hero who baffled the imagination and efforts of his enemies for a considerable time put up a strenuous fight, admirable in plan and execution, till the last breadth escaped from his body. He may have had his own faults and weaknesses. But as a fighter he showed marvellous energy, skill and courage. Nor did he lack the ingenuity in devising stratagems when necessary for his purpose. Never for a moment did he waver, in spite of adverse counsel. He believed in the cause he fought for, and never hesitated to lay down his life for it. The energy and the determination which he displayed were always echoed by those who stood by him and whom he inspired by his example. Any unbiassed readers of E.'s Rāmāyana will be struck by the remarkable personality of Rāwana, who drew from life its choicest gifts and faced its worst risks and dangers with the same spirit of adventure and heroism. It is impossible even for enemies not to be drawn irresistibly towards a character of such all-round magnitude.

In the original A.R. Rāma is a cold-blooded man who takes death as a matter of course and does not attach to it any importance. He despises the lamentations of Vibhīṣana, who deserted his elder brother at a most critical hour and played no inconsiderable part in his downfall, but who nevertheless was moved to tears at his death. He does not allow Vibhīṣana to weep to his heart's content, and asks him to arrange immediately for the cremation of the dead body of



the fallen foe. Such a procedure was quite repugnant to Eṣuttaccan's sense of public conduct, and he converts his Rama into a magnanimous enemy who is eager to pay his homage to the departed hero whose greatness is beyond question. In this respect he follows the Ādikavi, adding his own personal touches to raise the sublimity of the utterance. It is not heroic to carry hostility beyond death, and he who in the exultation of triumph does not forget to pay his tribute to the fallen enemy attains a moral dignity which only adds to his already established glory. It is also a part of one's duty to the dead. As I have already pointed out, Eṣuttaccan takes particular care that his hero should never make himself responsible for any such lapse of conduct. Here is what Rāma says about Rāvaṇa to console Vibhīṣaṇa :-

2.  
 " He is a great hero, having faced  
 me in battle and fought and met his end well  
 Do not mourn for him. It ill befits his  
 journey to the other world  
 Know, it is the duty of heroic kings to die  
 in battle  
 Only virtuous souls who die fighting attain  
 the 'heaven of heroism'. He has no more taints:  
 So do the 'after - rites' without delay.

According to Eṣuttaccan, all who have had contact with the deity either through devotion or enmity free themselves instantaneously from all effects of their evil actions. Ravana too underwent a similar process of purification, and established his right for a place in heaven. The poetic value of the

1. Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (Griffith's). p.289. Canto. CXI (1915) The warrior King has nobly died.....

2. Malayālam A.R.p.263

3. Vīryaswarga.

4. Sēṣakriya.



situation is thus considerably enhanced by Eṣuttaccan's treatment of it, and at the end of the protracted fight the reader also feels immensely relieved from the tension created by the heroic stand made by Rāvana and his hosts and his tragic end.

The character of Rāma, as conceived by Eṣuttaccan, required such a glorious finish. The personality of Rāma as revealed through Vālmīki's epic and through countless legends was immensely complex, its divinity and its humanity always warring against each other for supremacy. Poets and sages of India were alike responsible for the contradictions and incongruities which gathered around his personality in the course of his evolution. Eṣuttaccan's attempt has been to harmonise these incongruities and create out of them a personality admirable both in its human and divine aspects. The wide popularity of his work, which is still unrivalled, testifies to the remarkable success that has attended his attempt.

#### Eṣuttaccan's Rāvana.

His treatment of Rāvana also is characterised by a similar altruistic motive. As Rāma was raised in popular estimation, Rāvana too, underwent a corresponding degradation that was but inevitable. From the position of a rival hero whose methods and outlook differed widely from those of his enemy he was gradually converted into a demon. Nevertheless his humanity is visible enough through the fantastic conceptions that have surrounded this great hero, who still has a soft corner in the heart of Dravidian S.India. Scholars in modern



times have therefore begun to look upon the descriptions of his form and character with suspicion. His ten heads<sup>1.</sup> and twenty hands are explained as symbolic of his immense power, ten times<sup>2.</sup> above the average, on the analogy of the name Dasaratha. The latter is said to have been called such, not because he owned ten different chariots but because he could drive his chariot in ten directions, which indicated the extent of his power and influence. In the Yaksagāna literature in Kannada and Kathakali literature in Malayālam, Rāvaṇa is an important figure, and there are many plays in which the leading role is assigned to him. This fact proclaims the immense popularity of the legends about him and his exploits. It is also significant that Rama has little or no importance in this type of literature.

It is but reasonable to suppose that Eṣuttacān's conception of Rāvaṇa was influenced by these considerations. We have already commented on his abduction of Sīta. His appearance in saintly form for a thoroughly worldly purpose indicates the romantic bent of his mind; and his wooing of Sīta also is equally suggestive of culture and enlightenment. Though his abduction of Sīta was an act of vengeance, he no doubt fell in love with her and wanted to win her hand by appealing to her good sense and commending her beauty. Vālmīki makes him blow his own trumpet, and we find in his description

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1. There is also another Rāvaṇa with hundred heads, well known in Tamilian legends, as Mayil Rāvaṇan who has found his way into Aryan mythology as Pātāla Rāvaṇa.

2. Dasa, 'ten', Ratha 'a chariot'.



1.

a commonplace lover using the ordinary undignified language.

In the original A.R. the opposite extreme is exhibited. Rāvana

tries to install himself in the affections of Sīta by abusing

2.

Rāma and proving that he has no regard for her. Exuttaccan

raises the whole issue to a classic dignity by making the

lover perform a real intellectual feat. As usual he employs

words in double sense -

"Rāvana addressed endearing words of sweetness to  
bliss incarnate :-

"Fair Lady, listen to me who has become a  
slave to your lotus feet. Oh woman of sublime  
virtue, put me at ease and look at me, the  
Lord of Asuras and the world -

Why do you hide within yourself ?

Give me a quick glance of engaging curiosity.

My mind is fixed on you.

Reverend Dame ! Your husband the son of  
Dasaratha is visible only to few, and that  
too at times; only lucky people can succeed in  
seeing him after a persistent search. Fair  
lady ! you have nothing to do with the son of  
Dasaratha. He has no desire in anything at any  
time<sup>4</sup>.

5.

He is without any *guṇa*; constant embraces,  
company or enjoyment of your charms will not  
make him love you.

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1. V.R. Griffith's translation. Vol. IV. p. 329-331.

A.R.  
2. / L.B. Nath's translation. Verse 22-30., p. 117-118.

3. The implication is that Rāma is not a social being and the attempt to get at him is a laborious process in which only persistence and luck bring success. In the philosophical sense he is a God who is not visible to ordinary mortals.

4. In the worldly sense this means that one who is incapable of any personal attachment will never be a good husband. In the philosophical sense, he, being a god, is above all worldly desires.

5. In one sense, he has no physical qualities; in another, he has no good quality or virtue.



He has none to protect him and he never is without Sakti.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing that you can do for him.

He is without fame, gratitude, and personal feeling.<sup>2</sup>

None knows his exact nature. 4.

He is without Māna<sup>3</sup> and is a Pandita.<sup>5</sup>

He is always in the midst of foresters; has no aptitude for the best things of life.

Nor has he any sense of distinction

A low caste man or Brāhman, a cow or a dog are all the same for him.<sup>6</sup>

You and a savage woman make no difference to his mind

He has already forgotten you and there is no use waiting for him

There is no doubt that he is indifferent towards you

While I am your slave's slave; accept me straightway

Why give up a diamond that has come to your hand unsought

And seek a piece of lead ?

If you become my spouse

The fairies of heaven will be at your service with respect and reverence

Please do not lose time, enchanting beauty live forever as my sweetheart

Many a beauty does menial service to me

I am a terror even to the God of death

Think of the virtues of manliness.

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1. If Rāma is regarded as God he needs no protection. As a human being he is wandering about in the forest with none to protect him. He is devoted to Sakti-power divine and worldly and so has no consideration for you or, he always goes with the divine feminine energy (Sakti) and is never independent.

2. As a god he is above these attributes. As a man, his previous career according to Ravana does not show that he possesses these qualities.

3. Measure, or self-respect.

4. Scholar. In one sense he is the seat of knowledge. In another sense he is engaged in the acquisition of knowledge and as those of such nature are, has no taste for physical pleasures of any kind.

5. It may mean either hermits living in forests or uncivilised men.

6. The analogy is continued. God looks upon all alike. As a man he is unable to distinguish good from bad.



I am a revered man adored even by Indra  
 Have therefore some consideration for me  
 who have put myself entirely in your charge  
 and do as I desire  
 O essence of loveliness, lotus-faced beauty,  
 I am falling at your lotus-feet  
 Save me, save me, forever".

As a piece of ingenuity and subtle appeal this passage is brilliant. Eṣuttaccan looks upon Sītā not as a mere heroine but as the divine spouse of Rāma; and the opportunity to make love to her, even though it be in vain, is a rare occasion which would come within the reach of only exceptional persons. The fact that Rāvana was blessed with this chance is a circumstance in his favour, and he therefore had to be presented in proper form. Eṣuttaccan has shown that Rāvana deserves the first rank not only among warriors but also among lovers.

The next glimpse we get of Rāvana is when Hanumān is brought to Rāvana's durbar by Indrajit as a captive. The monkey chief destroyed the beautiful garden of Lanka and killed several attendants, as well as Akṣa, Rāvana's son, who came to stop him. Hanumān's crime was no doubt serious, and he expected the worst from the lord of Lanka by way of punishment. Rāvana was prepared to give him a hearing before he made up his mind as to the form of punishment due to him. The durbar is transformed into a judicial tribunal engaged in dealing with a capital crime. It is evident that the offender belongs to the enemy's camp, and the treatment that is accorded to him is bound to have its repercussions at the other end. It is interesting to notice how the different poets handle the situation. Vālmīki gives us an idea of the splendour of Rāvana's



person, the jewels and diamonds that form part of his adornment.<sup>1.</sup>  
 The author of the original A.R. is too business-like to waste any words on the description of Rāvana or his Court, although he makes Hanumān sermonise at length on the greatness of Rāma, the realisation of self, and the necessity of Rāvana's<sup>2.</sup> reconciliation with the Lord of Sīta for his own safety. It is only from Eṣuttacean's picture that we get an insight into the nature of the atmosphere that prevails at the Durbar. The essential requisite of a tribunal is that it should inspire confidence even in the minds of the criminal who is on trial. In this instance diplomatic considerations also require that, as the offence and the offender are of an unusual kind, the situation must be handled in a delicate manner. If the visitor is put at ease, he might give some clue to the plans of the enemy which might be profitable to know. Eṣuttacean takes care that this aspect is given due consideration. In his picture Prahasta,<sup>3</sup> who questions Hanumān at the instance of Rāvana, prefaces his queries with these significant words :-

"Prahasta in a mild and conciliatory tone asked thus :-

Oh Monkey ! who sent you here,  
 Before this royal durbar speak truth,  
 great soul  
 You are sure to be released  
 Do not entertain fear in your mind  
 This durbar is equal to Brahma's durbar  
 Untrue words, violation of Dharma, and  
 improper actions are unknown in the  
 country of the Lord of Lanka.

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1. V.R.Griffith's translation, Vol.IV, p.384-85

2. Hanuman is well impressed with Ravana's dignified bearing.

2-L.B.Nath's translation,p.

3. One of Rāvana's Ministers.



These words have a ring of sincerity that will win over even the most implacable of enemies, and convey the impression that Ravana's administration of justice was essentially sound and that he was not the monster that he is represented to be.

As an artist Bṛuttacean uses subtle suggestions, which make his pictures remarkably effective. He never spoils their effect by over-elaboration. In his delineation of Ravana he never uses abusive epithets, as other poets have done. The various characters of the story speak their own opinions, and Ravana get his due from his enemies and their partisans. But the poet rarely assumes personal responsibility in that respect. This attitude of the poet leaves the impression that Ravana is after all not a bad fellow, and <sup>what</sup> is said of him by his enemies must not be accepted at face-value.

There is also another important point in which he differs from the author of the original A.R. When Ravana falls on the battle-field, it is stated in the original A.R. that a light came out of his body in the direction of Rama, in whom it ultimately reposed. No such phenomenon appears in Bṛuttacean's version, and the omission is not without justification. Rama is in human form; and if as the A.R. wishes us to believe, this passage symbolises Ravana's

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1. We do not find it in Vālmiki.  
2. Original A.R.p.167. v.78-80.



soul attaining union with Rāma, who is regarded as the supreme soul, the form of the latter also should change. Throughout the work Rāma is represented as Viṣṇu in human form, and he appears in the divine form only to Kausalya at his birth, and then in secret. So long as the human form is retained, it is but appropriate that its functions also are presented as human. In the case of all whom Rāma killed a similar light appears, according to the author of the original A.R. and Eṣuttaccan:<sup>1.</sup> but the light in all such instances ascends to the heaven to join divine light. The distinction in Rāvaṇa's case is that he is the chief enemy of Rāma, and Eṣuttaccan shows this fact by simply saying that he fell <sup>and</sup> his soul ascended to heaven.

### Sīta.

The heroine of the Rāmāyaṇa is looked upon as an ideal of wifely devotion, like her sisters Sāvitrī and Damayanti, capable of immense suffering in its cause. Even the worst calamities in the form of forcible separation from her husband and imprisonment by another person who harasses her by professions of love and threatens her with death in the event of refusal are not strong enough to make her swerve from the high principle she cherishes. She appears more as a personification of a principle than as a being with a human touch and individuality. Such perfection is often associated with divinity, and Sīta also shares it with her husband in the Hindu scheme of thing. As in the case of Rāma, Eṣuttaccan has

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1. Virādha, Kabandha.



assigned a dual role to Sīta also. Without in any way lowering her from the exalted position she occupies in the world of mythology, Eṣuttaccan subtly attempts to humanise the character. When describing her marriage, with Rāma he remembers that it is a divine union, and no word suggestive of the usual erotic sentiments find a place in the description. But he also feels that even the union of divinities loses much of its charm if it is entirely divorced of romance. He therefore make his Sīta put the "garland of glances"<sup>1.</sup> on Rāma before she puts on him the garland of marriage. This like an electric switch, illumines the whole occasion. Eṣuttaccan is an adept in such subtle touches expressed in a word or two that hide a world of meaning.

During their flight from Lanka back to Ayōdhya Rāma describes to Sīta the various localities on the way which are associated with his activities. When they reach Kiṣkindha, the Kingdom of Vānaras, Sīta according to Eṣuttaccan expresses a desire to see the wives of the monkey chiefs, and the Vimāna lands there to pick them up. In the well known version of Vālmīki's work no such request is made by Sīta, although Mr. Griffith says that it is mentioned in the N.W. recension of the epic.<sup>2</sup> Kambar in his immortal work introduces a passage<sup>3.</sup> to that effect; but he leaves the vanara women behind after the exchange of courtesies. Eṣuttaccan's Sīta invites them to

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1. 'Nētrōlpala Māla - p.27.A.R.

2. Vide note under p.293.V.R.(Griffith)Vol.V. It is in the Kumbhakōṇam edition(Yud:Kand),p,470).

3. Kamba Rāmāyaṇa Caritram,p,411.



Ayōdhya, and they join the triumphal party in their journey thither. She even qualifies her request by the remark that they had been separated from their husbands long, and there is none who knows the pangs of separation better than she. Sīta's behaviour on the occasion cannot be regarded as a 'palpable interruption', as Mr. Griffith terms it. On the other hand, to ignore Vānara women in the hour of victory and triumph in view of what their husbands had done for her sake and the sake of her husband would be the height of ingratitude. They are all returning home to celebrate the happy termination of their troubles, and it is but proper that the wives of Vānara chiefs should also be allowed to participate in their joy. It would have been different if they had gone some other way. Whether Eṣuttaccan got the idea from the little known N.W. version of Vālmīki, or, whether it was his own suggestion, or whether he drew his inspiration from Kambar, it is not easy to say. From his general attitude towards the details of personal relationship and social conduct, of which there are innumerable instances in his work, it seems quite possible that the idea may have occurred to him independently.

#### Bharata and Hanumān.

These two characters stand on a level of their own in Rāmāyana. In their absolute self-surrender and devotion to Rāma they are supreme examples of Bhakti, which Eṣuttaccan regards above all other virtues of which the human soul is capable. It is impossible to resist tears when one



reads the description in the Malayālam A.R. of Bharata's mental agony caused by the news of his father's death and Rāma's exile due to his step-mother's intrigue. He immediately wants to clear away any misunderstanding and drags the whole court of Ayōdhya to the forest. He continues his journey on foot from Guha's abode; the first sight of Rāma's steps in the dust arouses in him a passion of affectionate adoration of his brother, and he is painted by our poet as rolling himself in it and pouring it over his head in his ecstacy<sup>1</sup>. In him brotherly love and godly love are wonderfully combined. While Bharata's sacrifice for his brother<sup>is</sup> immense, Hanumān's service to his master is unparalleled. Hanumān's achievements in Rāmāyana raise him to the foremost rank among the leading characters of the drama, and one Kānda is solely devoted to the narration of his flight to Lanka to carry his Lord's message and his stupendous feat of setting the city of Rāvana on fire. Eṣuttaccan has chosen the most beautiful metre, unrivalled in its sonorous beauty and flow, to relate the episode, and it eminently deserves its name of Sundarakāṇḍam<sup>2</sup>. He here makes a free display of his poetic genius, no longer handicapped by the restrictions imposed by the original. The same spirit pervades Yuddhakāṇḍa also, which is thrilling with the vivid descriptions of the battles fought by

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1. Even the author of the original A.R., who believes in Bhakti, only makes Bharata praise the dust on which Rāma had set his feet. (L.B.Nath's translation. p. 56 - Chapter IX - Stanza 3)  
 2. Sundaram = beautiful.



different heroes and ultimately by Rāvaṇa and Rāma.

In the last two Kāṇḍas the deviations from the original are more numerous, and the poet treats his theme far more independently. The descriptions of the battle may be regarded as a matter of detail. The sermon on the futility of human desires and the unreasonableness of attachment to the body and family which Lakṣmaṇa preaches when Vibhīṣaṇa begins to mourn for Rāvaṇa have been omitted by Eṣuttaccan with sufficient reason. The occasion is too sorrowful for anybody concerned to bear with a long discourse of the kind. A similar instance is the introduction of the Ādityahṛīdaya hymn, which Agastya delivers to Rāma when the battle is raging furiously and Rāma feels shaken in spirit and is in need of an invigorating elixir to continue his fight with unabated will. The original A.R. has ignored it, while Eṣuttaccan, following the example of Vālmīki,<sup>2.</sup> gives it prominence, elaborating the hymn in his own way and adding all the attributes of the Sun God. Apart from its appropriateness to the occasion, in which a protracted war had brought terrible exhaustion on body and spirit of those engaged in it, Eṣuttaccan's partiality to the Hymn can be explained by his reverence for the traditional Sun-worship that prevails among Malayālis.<sup>3.</sup>

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1. Original A.R.p.169 v.11-25.

2. V.R.(Griffith), Vol.V, p,248.

3. The custom is often referred to in the Ballads of Malabar, in which the heroes are described as worshipping sun and earth before they begin their daily lessons in their gymnasium or start a journey in the morning.



### Conclusion.

The foregoing sketch gives us an idea of the way in which Ezuttaccan has handled the epic of Rāmāyaṇa. As I have already observed in the beginning his work has all the freshness of an independent work, though it is based on the original A.R. He has also freely drawn from Vālmīki and other authors whenever his ideas of poetic justice and discretion demanded it. Even when he borrows from others, he presents the matter in his own inimitable way, which when combined with his original additions makes his epic an epoch-making production of the age.

With all its literary beauty and majesty of diction, however, E's. Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa leaves the impression on the reader that in it the poet's genius has not reached its full height. Here and there a certain amount of restraint is visible, and the poet seems to be holding his muse in check. The dominant idealistic tone of the story and the didactic purpose which he wanted to fulfil through it perhaps deterred him from the unreserved exhibition of his talents, or it may be his genius was still growing. To enjoy him at his best we must turn to his other epic, Mahābhāratam, which is dealt with in the succeeding chapter.



Srī Mahābhāratam.

CHAPTER IV.



Introductory.Chapter IVSri Mahābhārata.

The change from Kṛttacān's Adh:Rāmāyaṇa to his Mahābhārata is like the one from flower to fruit. In the one we enjoy the fragrance and the promise of a fruit and in the other the real sweetness in its finished manifestation. If the analogy is stressed further, we have to presume that there must have been a reasonable interval between the flower and fruit, although evidence as to the actual point of time is lacking. As we have pointed out at the end of the last chapter, A.R. leaves the impression that the poet has not employed his powers to their fullest capacity, either through the handicap which the subject matter entailed, or through the sense that they should be reserved for something better. The difference in the general tone and execution between both is pretty obvious even to a casual reader. In Rāmāyaṇa a high note of idealism prevails and the language employed is correspondingly serious and heavy, although its natural genius appears now and then in spite of a conscious effort to control it. In Mahābhārata the poet's art breathes a wider freedom in scope and range that could be borne only of complete mastery and mature growth. Perhaps the themes of the two epics rendered this change necessary and desirable. In A.R. there is a unity of design which necessarily restricts the free play of the poet's fancy, as in it he has endeavoured to achieve a purpose which is not purely poetic. Therein we



witness a struggle between the philosopher and the poet, the former keen on reform, attempting the unique experiment of clothing in poetic garb his sublimest thoughts, which are not quite compatible with pure poetry, while the latter asserts himself when occasions offer in spite of the restraints imposed by the former. In Bhārata no such struggle is visible: the two have wonderfully combined, leaving the lead to poetry. Whether the change, which has been no doubt a distinct gain so far as literature is concerned, is due to the growing conviction that while philosophy changes poetry lasts, it is not easy to determine. As the proverb goes in Malayālam, we shall be satisfied with the sweets that are given rather than enquire the formula of their preparation.

Before we actually enter into the contents of the work we shall pause for the moment to consider its relationship with the original epic, in Sanskrit. The size<sup>1.</sup> itself indicates that Eṣuttacean never attempted a rendering of the whole epic with its innumerable Upākhyānams and legendary additions, and there has been considerable exercise of discrimination. A good number of stories which have crept in the Sambhavam and Āraṇyam have been omitted, and<sup>the</sup> Bhagavadgita

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1. Eṣuttacean's Bhārata runs only to 441 pages in the printed edition. In modern times the great epic has been rendered into Malayālam in its full form by Kuṅṅu Kuttan Tampurān. It is 10 times bigger than Eṣuttacean's work.



is the most notable of the omissions. The Gīta however, is mentioned in a passing reference which will be discussed in the course of this chapter. The Pāṇḍava story, which forms the skeleton of the great epic, is followed in all its details, with as much addition of extraneous matter as will be helpful to illuminate the main theme. It is interesting to enquire what principle, if any governs the eliminations and omissions. The question takes us to a wider issue concerning the original epic and its various recensions. Critical thought in Eṣuttaccan's time seems to have been quite aware of the developments the epic assumed in the course of its evolution. Certainly Eṣuttaccan has his own views about it, which apparently must have been the guiding factor which ultimately determined the form of his work. The doubt raised by modern scholarship about the authorship of the epic was a definite issue with Eṣuttaccan, and he goes to the extent of saying in the prologue that it is, like the Vēdas, apaura gēya.<sup>1.</sup> He emphasises further that nowhere is it mentioned that the Bhāratam was composed by Dwaipāyana;<sup>2.</sup> it was only narrated by him. Its importance, he affirms, is in the fact that Bhagavān Vēdavyāsa introduced famous works like 'Gīta' and Sahasranāma into the Bhāratam,

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1. Ūrkumpōlapauruṣēyatwamunditinnato.

2. (a) Dwaipāyanōṣṭa puta niserta mennākunnu  
Dwaipāyanākṛita mennatu collilello. Mal: Bh: .p.2.

(b) Compare this with the statement of Prof. E. W. Hopkins  
The Great Epic of India. p.50, Chapter II.



which thereupon began to rank even with the Vēdas. Eṣuttaccan<sup>1.</sup> further states that Paulōmam and Āstikam are Paribhāṣas, and this opinion is ascribed to Vyāsa himself. In the prologue it is also mentioned that the Bhāratam has undergone three stages in its evolution, in which the final stage is due to Ugrasravas, the Sūta who narrated the story to the sages assembled in Naimiśārāyaṃ under the leadership of Samaka for the "sacrifice that lasted for twelve years. The Sūta says that he is narrating the version which Vaisampāyana, the famous disciple of Vyāsa, expounded to Janamējaya during his great serpent-sacrifice. Vaisampāyana had learned the story from his guru, who is thus believed to be the original narrator of the epic. It is also significant that Eṣuttaccan mostly uses the word 'Bharatam' as the title of his work 'Bharatam', and not 'Mahābhāratam' - thus implying that he is rendering into Malayalam only the Bhāratam and not the greater epic Mahābhāratam, as it was called in its ultimate form.

What exactly was the form and the content of the original Bharata epic ascribed to Vyāsa is still a matter of speculation. The matter has been investigated by both oriental and occidental scholars, and it is interesting to note the various conclusions they have arrived at. Even the name of the original work is a disputed point. We have the authority of the epic itself that it was once known by the title of

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1. Usually means a commentary. Here it signifies that they do not form part of the original Bhāratam and they were added to elucidate the events described in the epic. This corresponds to their description as 'roots' in the original epic. K.K.Bha.p.3.



1. 'Jaya', 'Victory'. This raises the question of the genesis of the title Mahābhārata by which it is known for centuries. It takes its name from the Bhārata line of Kings that figure in the story, although the founder of the dynasty appears very seldom in its narration. Because it is divided into a number of 'Parvams' or chapters, it is sometimes called Parvam. We have therefore to conclude that one of the compilers styled it Mahābhārata to distinguish his version from the Bhārata. A similar uncertainty exists about the actual beginning of the Sanskrit epic. "Some believe", it is said, "that Mahābhārata begins with Uparicara, others with Āstika, and others still with the word Manu". It is usual in many ancient works to give a summary of the contents in the prologue; and in the Malayālam Bhārata the first parvam, Paulōmam, answers that purpose. We find the same in Vālmīki's epic. Whether this first parvam is by the original author or subsequent editors or compilers it is not easy to say.

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..... Jayamudīrayāt.- invocation slōka.

1. Jayōnāmēti hāsōyam (swargārōhanam) (C.V. Vaidya, Mahābhārata a criticism, p.2)

2. This is attested by the Malayālam proverb - "Parvam Vāyicōal Sarvōm ariyām" (If one reads Parvam, one can know everything).

3. Vyāsa is supposed to have taught his work to five of his pupils; and each one of them is said to have produced a separate edition of the epic. Mah:Bh. a criticism, p.4.

4. The Mahābhārata: A criticism, p.2



In the Astikam it is clearly stated that Ugrasravas is repeating or retelling what has already been narrated before by Vaisampāyana. So, as Mr. Vaidya concludes, there is absolutely no doubt about the two editions which the original form of the story underwent and also the name of the poets who made those compilations, since both mention Vyāsa, on whose work theirs were based. The first person to issue the epic story in some concrete form was apparently a Vyāsa.<sup>1.</sup> The word Vyāsa may mean simply an editor or compiler; and each of the work to which it is attached had at least one (sometimes more than one) Vyāsa who put it into orderly shape.

Mahābhārata. The history of criticism.

It is not easy to determine the precise forms the epic assumed in different stages. The study of the epic, particularly in the west, beginning from C. Lassen (1837) to E. Washburn Hopkins (1915),<sup>2.</sup> has revealed many illuminating facts, and two schools of thought have emerged, one favouring the analytical method and the other the synthetic method. The former is ably championed by E. W. Hopkins, whose masterly analysis resulted in the assumption that in the developmental history of the epic there were four distinct stages, viz:-

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1. From the enormous amount of literature from the Vedas down to the Purāṇas that shelter under the wings of this name one must hesitate to regard him as one individual. The name may as well imply an institution that existed for several centuries.

2. The author of The Great Epic of India.



- (1) 400 B.C., when there was only a collection of Bhārata lays in which Pāṇḍavas were unknown
- (2) 400 -200 B.C., when the Mahābhārata tale sprang up with Pāṇḍavas as the heroes, and Kṛṣṇa as a demi-god
- (3) 200 B.C. to 100 or 200 A.D., when Kṛṣṇa assumed the importance of a supreme god, and interpolations of a didactic nature and many episodes were added
- (4) 200 - 400 A.D., when the introduction and the later parts were added.<sup>1.</sup>

The other school, headed by J.Dahlmann, holds the view that the epic has a unity of its own.<sup>2.</sup> He also admits the existence of two distinct elements in it, narrative and didactic, which were combined by a clever diaskauast who gave it its present form.<sup>3.</sup> Mr.G.J.Held, the latest exponent of this school, elaborates the thesis further on ethnological lines also, and believes in the unity of the epic. To me the necessity of approaching the epic from two such opposite view-points is not quite apparent. The analytical school does not ignore the fact that the main stream of legends embodied in the epic centres round the Bhārata line of kings, although extraneous stories also have found their way into it, by way of answer to the questions of the listeners to the narrator. The synthetic school on the other hand admits that the materials

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1. The Great Epic of India, p.397-398.

2. Quoted in The Mahābhārata, by G.J.Held, p.14.

3. The author of "The Mahābhārata, An Ethnological study 1935.



of which the epic is composed are of two different kinds. So far there is common ground. To admit difference in the nature of the subject matter, which might probably be the result of interference with the epic material by different hands, is to agree to the theory of interpolation. The cultural background which necessitated the alterations in the epic at different stages is not disputed by either. There is therefore, more reason for both the schools to establish a common ground than to stick to their extreme view-points. The form in which we find the epic now is no doubt the work of the last compiler. The question of his indebtedness to the previous editors is a disputed point which can only be settled by the analytical method. The more minute the analysis is the better will be the results achieved and the greater the volume of information collected, out of this gigantic literary venture. Even supposing that the Pāṇḍavas' story entered into it at a later stage, its connection with the Bharata story is unquestionable. In any case it must have been there when Vaisampāyana related the epic to Janamējaya, who as their lineal descendent had a personal interest in the story. The sages of Maimisāranya are not in the same position. Their interests were purely academic or cultural, and to a certain extent mixed with the idea of a learned entertainment during intervals between exacting work connected with the sacrifice. It will not be unreasonable therefore to suppose that it was in the last stage (at the hands of Sūta and the



residents in the hermitage of saunaka) that the Mahābhārata in its ultimate form emerged, as we find on that occasion a deliberate attempt to study the great work inspired by purely cultural motives. This endeavour is quite in keeping with the tradition of that hermitage, where according to legend the Purāṇas<sup>1</sup> were similarly handled, and Mahābhārata was probably the first to receive their attention. The sages (who were also scholars) seemed to have accomplished this with the co-operation of the Sūtas, who were experts in mythology and dynastic history and professional singers and reciters. This view helps us to understand why we find in Mahābhārata two distinct types of material as the two agencies involved in re-shaping the epic were the inheritors of two different traditions. The Sūta represented the Kṣatriyan and the sages the Brahmanic points of view. The former supplied the narrative element, and the latter the didactic element, incorporating their cherished religious convictions and doctrines. As Pargiter<sup>2</sup> pertinently suggests, this combined effort marks the transition of these lays of popular knowledge from Kṣatriyan to Brahmanic control, which retained its hold on it ever since. To this extent the legend of the sages of Naimiśāranya (who may be compared mutatis mutandis to a modern university) seems to have a basis of reality; how far the local habitation and name

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1. Bhāgavata Brahmāṇḍa, etc.

2. Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 62.



assigned by tradition to this institution are literally correct must remain uncertain

The epic in Malayālam.

We will now pass on to the epic in Malayālam. Even in the arrangement and naming of the Parvas Eṣuttaccan's plan is different. There is no parvam<sup>1.</sup> with the title of Adi in E's work, in which the first two chapters, which he says do not belong to the epic proper and are introductory, are called Paulōmam and Āstikam. The first refers to Vyāsa's work, Vaisampāyana's classic narration of the epic at the serpent-sacrifice of Janamējaya, and the Sūta's repetition of it to Saunaka and others, gives a brief summary of the contents of the Mahābhārata from Sambhavam to Svargārōḥaṇam and concludes with the story of Udanka, who advises Janamējaya to perform the serpent-sacrifice. The next, Āstikam, describes the sacrifice of the king and the arrival of Āstika, at whose instance the sacrifice was terminated. Then comes Sambhava Parva, with which according to Eṣuttaccan the Bhārata opens. He begins it as a new work with the usual invocations. Here again there is a summary of the whole epic beginning from

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1. Vide appendix I Note I to C.V. Vaidya's work in which the Parvas with the number of ślōkas in each are mentioned in a tabular form. Eṣuttaccan's arrangement follows the enumeration of parvas given in the epic: (K.K.Bh.p.3) Paulōmam and Āstikam are included under Adi.



Dakṣa up to the coronation of Abhimanyu, followed by detailed narration of certain legends, in which the priority is given to the birth of Vyāsa, who is supposed to be the original compiler of the epic. The other episodes which are described in detail are the stories of Yayāti, Sakuntala and Bhīṣma, which naturally lead to the story of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The rest of the titles are the same as those given in the original epic, except in two cases. Sambhavam closes with the story of the destruction of the Khāṇḍava forest. It is noteworthy here that Indra entreats Kṛṣṇa to forgive his unsuccessful intervention in the affair and leaves the impression on the reader that Kṛṣṇa is the real strength behind Arjuna. There is also a note at the end of the parvam which says "Iti śrīmahābhārate Śatasahasrikāyām Samhitāyām Paribhāṣarūpam Sambhavaparvam Samāptam. In this the Mahābhārata is called a 'collection of 100,000 parts' and the Sambhavam itself is said to be in the form of a Paribhāṣa. This statement is significant. If the term paribhāṣa is to be taken in the sense of an explanation or

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1. This episode must be regarded to have been added by the later compilers as Vyāsa is not likely to narrate his own story.

2. Vanaparva is called Āraṇyam; and there is a small parvam entitled Aśvikaṁ between Śrī and saṁptikam which are classed as sub-sections in the original epic. The number of chapters and ślokaś enumerated in Paulōman generally agrees with what is given by Sūta. The total number of parvams according to K. is 18, of chapters 2000, of ślokaś 100,000, which after making due allowance for the Hindu partiality for round numbers approximate to what is found in M. Bh. (Bombay edition).

3. In the original epic the appellation 'Śata Sahasrikāyām' is repeated at the end of every parva.

4. Compare above, p. 201.



or introduction, it would suggest that to the poet's mind the important part of the epic is yet to follow, and that the portion narrated so far is an entity by itself. The Khāṇḍava episode ends in an unqualified victory: and both Nārāyaṇa and Nara are active participants in it. This also reminds us of the <sup>1.</sup> invocatory sloka in which the blessings of both Nārāyaṇa and Nara are sought to help the poet to narrate 'Jayam' or victory. In the epic as it is, the end does not take the form of victory; rather is it the reverse. The Pāṇḍavas, bereft of all their ancient glory, were unable to defend themselves against the attacks of barbarians and were obliged to go on a pilgrimage, giving up all their earthly interests. One after another they fall on the way, except the eldest brother, who is the only person considered fit to enter heaven in his human form. Even there the sight of Duryōdhana, who had asked for his short-lived heavenly seat at the time of his cousin's entry in it, was not a happy event. A culmination like this can by no stretch of imagination be called a 'victory'. The way in which E. concludes Sambhavam therefore raises a doubt whether he believed that, in the figurative language of Mr. Hopkins, this was the kernel round which the threads of other stories were <sup>2.</sup> subsequently woven by Vaisampāyana and others. It must also be stated at the same time that E. leaves it at that and does not make any positive statement on the question.

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1. Nārāyaṇam Namaskṛitya Naram...Jayamudīrayēt.

2. The Great Epic of India, p. 363.



The other parvams follow the course of the story narrated in the original epic, omitting many of the didactic disquisitions like the Gīta and Anugīta and also Upākhyānams. For instance, in Āraṇyam only the story of Naḷa and the Rāmāyaṇa are included, although a passing statement is made that Brihadaswa and others, told<sup>1.</sup> Yudhiṣṭhira a number of other stories and there is no time to describe them. Here another fact strikes us. In the summary of Rāmāyaṇa, which is fairly big in proportion to the length of other episodes included in the work, the presentation exceeds the limits of a summary. In a chapter covering 20 pages, 11 pages are devoted to the Rāmāyaṇa story: not a single main event in the Rāmāyaṇa is omitted,<sup>2.</sup> and many important details also find a place there. One episode particularly deserves mention. Lakṣmaṇa's arrival at Kiṣkindha to communicate to the Vānara chief Rāma's displeasure at the unusual delay in fulfilling his part of the agreement is treated at length and occupies a much larger space than that allotted to it in A.R. When Lakṣmaṇa starts, he thinks that as one elder brother had been killed by another elder brother, one younger brother could very well deal with the other younger brother. When he appears at the gate of Kiṣkindha and sounds his bowstring, the whole Vānara host trembles, and Suṅgrīva at the advice of Hanumān

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1. Dhaumya and Mārkaṇḍēya.

2. For instance, even the deceptive cry of Mārīca, 'Jānaki! Lakṣmaṇa!' finds mention. Mal:M.Bh.p.226-237.



1.

sends Tāra first to greet Lakṣmaṇa. The description which Eṣuttaccan makes of Tāra in Bha: is different from what we find in A.R. Here the Vānara beauty is presented in all her sensuous splendour, purposely designed to distract the attention of Lakṣmaṇa, who is found to be in a hostile and angry mood. She welcomes him more like a lover than a host, exposing her charms to his admiring gaze. This had the desired effect. Lakṣmaṇa as in ordinary life, yields<sup>2.</sup> to the influence of womanly beauty on man.

The importance of Kṛṣṇa in Eṣuttaccan's epic.

The above analysis gives the impression that

Eṣuttaccan's handling of the story was mainly guided by the<sup>3.</sup> idea that the Pāṇḍava story, with Kṛṣṇa as their guiding genius, is the important part of Mahābhārata. All the other episodes are subsidiary to this main theme. The episodes which he has selected for somewhat detailed treatment in Sambhavam and other parvams are intended only to illuminate this. In the Pāṇḍava story the importance of Kṛṣṇa is obvious. Kṛṣṇa appears in the story for the first time at the marriage of Draupadi, when he recognises the pāṇḍavas in the guise of Brāhmins and points them out to his brother.

1. In the original M.Bh. Sugrīva only receives Lakṣmaṇa with his wife. K.K.M.Bh.p.629.

2. This is an example of E's poetic sensibility getting the upper hand over his philosophic outlook.

3. He concludes with the ascent of Yudhiṣṭhira to heaven and omits Khilaparva and Harivamsa, which are appended to the original epic.



Their relationship as paternal cousins is cemented by the marriage of Arjuna with Subhadra, and ever after no serious action of any kind is undertaken by the Pāṇḍavas without consulting Kṛṇa, who is acknowledged by them as their supreme deity and benefactor at the Rājāsūya sacrifice. His divine aspect, which has been for some time, a matter of opinion among interested partisans, manifests itself clearly when Draupadi cries for his help when she is insulted and disgraced publicly by Duśśāsana after the fateful game of dice. From that moment onwards Kṛṇa is no longer in the background, but a regular actor in the whole drama. With his appearance as a mediator between the contending parties and the assertion of his divine personality on that occasion to check the contemplated insult to him by the Kauravas he virtually becomes the chief actor, and the Pāṇḍavas his accomplices or agents. Towards the end of the story his disappearance from the stage reduces the Pāṇḍavas to a state of helplessness and destitution, and they are obliged to retire, meeting an end which is not in keeping with their past glory or exploits. The combination of Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṇa is thus fully illustrated. One without the other is powerless; Nārāyaṇa, being the major representative of the divine energy, draws away with him even the vitality of his counterpart.

It is this vision of Kṛṇa in the Bhārata story that has appealed to Mūrtacān, and his attempt has been to present the epic theme so as to display his favourite deity to the fullest advantage. Even from the



very beginning he does not hesitate to say that it is the story of Kṛṣṇa contained in the sacred work of Vyāsa that he is attempting to narrate, and he addresses his parrot in that strain. The foundation for this is also laid by describing the birth of Kṛṣṇa after the Vyāsa episode and before the story of the Pāṇḍava's ancestry for the purpose of relieving earth of her burden of Asuras who had been born as Kings in that age. He repeats this at the beginning of every chapter, and wherever Kṛṣṇa appears there is the usual praise of the deity accompanied by a description of the God's powers and influence over mankind and the inevitable divine smile. At the commencement of Sambhavam the parrot is asked to narrate the story of the Pāṇḍavas in brief, at the same time in the best form of which she is capable. Even when describing the youth of the Pāṇḍavas at Hastinapura and the rivalry between them and the Kauravas Eṣuttaccan tells readers that Suyōdhana and his brothers have Sakuni and Karna as their friends, while the Pāṇḍavas have only God as friend. This conception of Kṛṣṇa as the force behind the Pāṇḍava story as against their enemies

runs throughout Eṣuttaccan's work, Bhīṣma, Vidura and even Vyāsa

1. Eṣuttaccan's works are all in the form of parrot songs, Kiliṭṭu, (Kili- parrot, ṭṭu, song). It was the custom with ancient poets in Malayalam to imagine a parrot or swan possessing supernatural powers and knowledge as the narrator of stories. In the case of parrots its sweet sound symbolises the music of poetry. In modern times the term is only applied to the metre of certain types of poetry.

2. Mal:MBh:p.59 - Eṇṇālum curukkiṇṇā pāṇḍavarute Katha.....

3. It is always a hen-parrot.



emphasise this fact when they offer advice to Dhṛitarāṣṭhra<sup>1.</sup> and Suyōdhana on different occasions. The finishing touch is given at the Aswamedha of Yudhiṣṭhira, which celebrates the victory won by arms and marks a fitting culmination of his political career begun with a Rājasūya. There Eṣuttacean makes the Brāhmanas who attended the ceremony say that this surpasses in grandeur all the sacrifices performed by kings in ancient times, for the reason that he has as his friend no less a personage than the God Kṛṣṇa, who is prepared to do even menial<sup>2.</sup> work for his devotee, and his fortune is thus unrivalled. At the end of the work also he makes Sūta conclude his long<sup>3.</sup> narration by contemplating Kṛṣṇa.

This conception of Kṛṣṇa is the outcome of Eṣuttacean's own conviction strengthened by his study of Mahābhārata and his proximity to the Guruvayūr temple, where Kṛṣṇa worship is even now dominant. He takes his stand on the version communicated to Janamējaya by Vaiśampāyana. The questions of Janamējaya and the answers of the narrator are very often referred to, while Sūta is represented as only repeating what Vaiśampāyana had already said. The reference to Sūta is a mere formality.

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1. Mal: Mbh: p. 268, p. 280, p. 384.

2. " " p. 416.

3. " " p. 441.



This leads to a consideration of the central idea of K's epic, which, unlike the original Bharatam, has a unity of design and execution. Kṛttacāra seems to have made a unique experiment with the epic theme. While he was fully alive to the merits of the original epic as a store-house of knowledge, religious and secular, as a poet he was convinced that the immensity of its size and the diverse doctrines it preaches have deprived it of much of its value as the highest expression of art. The central stem having been overburdened with huge appendages, it appeared too weak to support them. The essence of its beauty had been lost in the vast mass of extraneous matter that had been added for its adornment. At the same time, he realises that it contained the brightest gems of Hindu artistic and philosophic thought, which needed re-emphasis and re-affirmation. The epic in the course of its progress shared the fate of many a Hindu institution, having been shaped and re-shaped by many hands, at different times according to the necessities and requirements of the society that was also growing with it, and it was looked upon as a visible symbol of the national mind. The traditional practice of singing it for popular amusement and instruction tended to make it grow to vast and unwieldy size, so that the original outline became more and more obscured. As a national heritage every section of Hindu society claimed it, and it tended to absorb all sorts of elements, good, bad and indifferent. Such a tendency, though it developed its encyclopaedic character, took away much of its



greatness and beauty as a constructive work of art.

Kāttaccan's attempt therefore was to present to his countrymen a work focussing their attention upon the essential features of the great epic, which they should enjoy primarily as a poem dealing with their heroic past. What they had to learn from it should not in any way interfere with their enjoyment of its poetry, and should be within their reach without any conscious effort on their part. He must have also felt that he had given them perhaps more than enough food for thought in his A.R., which contained enough of metaphysical speculation on the nature of Ātma and Paramātmā and such questions. He therefore laid the emphasis upon the narrative element in his Bharatam and gave to the didactic element a very subordinate place.

Such a plan required that a kind of unity had to be created out of the heterogeneous material supplied by the epic. Artist as he was, he made a clear distinction between the essential and the non-essential, and emphasised the former for the sake of effect. Such a unity was designed only for artistic purposes and had as its aim the satisfaction of pure aesthetic impulse. It has nothing to do with the unity which ethnologists are anxious to build on the theory of phratry-relationship or potlatch in respect of the epic. They challenge all accepted principles of linguistic analysis which so far has led all other branches of study in collecting positive proof to render the study of the epic profitable. Ethnological speculations as

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1. The Mahābhārata, an ethnological study, Ch. VI.



applied here are at best uncertain. The phratry relationship is usually found in the primitive condition of a society. Such a conception is hardly compatible with the highly ethical teachings contained in the Bhagavadgīta, which cannot be considered as the product of an uncivilised state. The champions of the theory are not prepared to look upon the Gīta and other didactic portions of the epic as interpolations. On the contrary, they assert that they form integral parts of the epic.<sup>1.</sup> The potlatch theory stands on a similar footing.

Ežuttacean's epic is an emphatic answer to these theories. The unity which he has created is the product of his own artistic genius, and is not inspired by any other collateral circumstances or evidence. His selection of the Pāṇḍava episode as the central theme is not in order to sing the glories of the five brothers but to bring his favourite God into greater prominence. The Pāṇḍavas according to him deserve credit only for their devotion to Kṛṣṇa, but for whose help they would have been nowhere in the struggle recorded in the epic.

There is also another undercurrent which amplifies the unity which Ežuttacean constructs around the character of Kṛṣṇa. It is his faith in destiny, of which Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment. He conceives the Bhārata war as a conflict of opposing forces, which go under the generic terms 'good and evil'. We have already referred to the 'asura theory', that lies,

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1. The gamble with dice is the basis of this theory. There is some point in applying the argument to the Rājasūya sacrifice, which signifies common consent, an essential condition of a potlatch ; but the gamble is obviously the result of an intrigue.



according to our poet, at the background of the terrible conflict into which the different characters are drawn by an irresistible force of circumstances, of which some of them were conscious. In spite of the various nefarious attempts of Suyōdhana and his vicious circle, the Pāṇḍavas escape death at the early stage of the story. With the acquisition of the Khāṇḍava forest and the performance of Rājasūya they reach the height of prosperity and glory, which excite the jealousy of their kinmen and lead to the unfortunate gamble. Again an instance of the subtle work of destiny! Terrible consequences follow. In spite of the advice of Bhīṣma and others interested in the welfare of both parties. Suyōdhana remains obdurate with the curse of Draupadi staring him in the face. After the exile and the period of disguise, the Pāṇḍavas return to claim their kingdom. Kṛṇa mediates in vain, and the war is declared in which he takes a personal interest intensified by the sense of the insult offered to him by the 'hundred brothers'. The whole course of events moves in a vicious circle, from which the personalities involved find themselves unable to escape, leading to a great catastrophe. The first person to anticipate this is Vidura, who warns Dhṛtarāṣṭhra on the eve of Kṛṇa's visit thus:-

It is not possible to go against destiny  
This is ordained by God  
Human will is powerless<sup>1</sup>.

This is echoed by Bhīṣma<sup>2</sup> and Drōṇa<sup>3</sup>, who much against

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1. 2, 3, Mal:Bh:p.268-269.



their will join the Kauravas in their fight against the Pāṇḍavas. The course of destiny becomes more aggressive as the battle proceeds. Both Bhīṣma and Drōṇa, invincible bowmen as they are die, not vanquished but condemned through curses earned during their life-time. In fact, all the notable victories won by the Pāṇḍavas are not the outcome of their own superior skill or valour but are due to adventitious circumstances like these. Drōṇa, when entreated to refrain from the use of disastrous weapons in the war, proclaims the sentiment with renewed emphasis :-

We are all under the influence of God's will,  
and God's will will be fulfilled.

1.

Kṛṣṇa expresses the same idea when he consoles Dhṛtarāṣṭra after the death of Duryōdhana and when he is hit by the hunter and foresees the destruction of his own clan. It receives the authority of Vyāsa himself when Aśvathāma uses a Brahmāstra to kill the Pāṇḍavas 'root and branch', and Arjuna meets it with his counter-weapon, so that wholesale destruction is imminent.

2.

It reacts on Kṛṣṇa himself when Gandhārī pronounces doom on him and his line at the battle-field.

3.

He then accepts the curse, saying that he is preparing for his end and that he is glad that ~~she~~ also thinks like-wise. He thus identifies himself with destiny. Vidura sums up the whole philosophy by coupling destiny with the doctrine of Karma.

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1. Mal.Bh.p.369, 427, 428.

2, 3. - Mal.Bh.p.379, 389.

4. Mal.Bh.p.382.



Bhūttaccan employs this doctrine as a running commentary on the Mahābhārata story, in which one party, though much superior to the other in equipment and valour, perishes through the play of destiny, while the other, though deficient in many respects, wins by the same agency impersonated in Kṛṣṇa. Thus illustrating the influence of the divine will over human will and power, he introduces his pet doctrine of Bhakti as the only means of turning destiny in one's favour.

### B's. omissions.

In the light of the above considerations, the omissions we notice in his work appear to have been made deliberately, and based on certain principles. Instances of omissions are innumerable; and both the narrative and didactic parts have been equally subjected to the guillotine. Two of the numerous episodes omitted may be noticed as typical cases. One such is the story of Hariscandra in Udyōgam, which has been recalled by Nārada to remind Yudhiṣṭhira of the virtues of the Rājasūya. Bhūttaccan dismisses the whole episode in a line, while the original devotes some pages to it. The other relates to Sāvitrī, the paragon of chastity in Hindu mythology. Both the stories illustrate the triumph of human will-power over destiny. Hariscandra undergoes all sorts of miseries, arising out of his degradation through the machinations of Viśvāmitra, who in the story appears as the agent of destiny. The rivalry between Viśvāmitra and Vasistha, taking the form of a challenge on the



truthfulness of the great king, is the real motive force, and Hariscandra is not responsible for it; but his unconquerable will not to swerve from the path of truth ultimately triumphs.

Sāvitri also presents a similar problem. Even the god of death, who claims the life of her husband in the usual course of his dispensation, is amazed at her extra-ordinary power acquired through her unparalleled devotion to virtue, and eventually complies with her request. Both these stories run counter to the doctrine of destiny which E. developes in his epic, and are out of tune with its general spirit. They are therefore rejected. In the case of the Sāvitri episode there is not even a reference. Probably E. also thought that in the context in which the question is asked it is not very appropriate. In the original epic the story is narrated in answer to Yudhīsthira's demand for an instance in which a chaste woman like Draupadi suffers. The wife of the Pāṇḍavas has very little in common with Savitri. Perhaps E. may have even doubted whether a woman with five husbands could really be called a chaste woman. To compare her with the redoubtable champion of chastity is to make that virtue look ridiculous.

Among the omissions in the didactic element the Bh.Gīta is the most conspicuous. E. has his own justification for it. In the first instance, a long work like the Gīta, containing 18 chapters, does not fit in with his scheme of Bharatan, in which



he attempts the narration of the story within the smallest compass possible. To introduce a work of the magnitude of the Gīta into it would certainly upset its unity and be out of proportion to its size. Moreover, he seems to have also doubted the consistency of its teachings or the propriety and practicability of a long discourse on the occasion. In his prologue, when giving the summary<sup>1.</sup> of all the Parvas, he speaks of Kṛṣṇa's message to Arjuna when the Pāṇḍava shows signs of mental depression at the sight of his gurus and kinsmen on the other side, against whom he has to fight, and feels keenly the inhumanity of the whole enterprise. Kṛṣṇa then takes pity on him as his devotee and preaches to him the truth of Vedānta. His discourse also illuminates the various problems relating to eternity, supreme knowledge, varṇāśramacāra, sūtrataṭṭva, sāṅkhya yōga etc. The conception of duality vanishes from Arjuna's mind, and he is convinced of the doctrine of monism, which gives him contentment. To create confidence in him Kṛṣṇa shows him his universal form. In Bhīṣma, where the original epic introduces the Gīta, he presents it in a different way.<sup>2.</sup> The tragedy of the scene that arouses Arjuna's despondency is emphasised, and Kṛṣṇa reminds him of his duty to fight as a king and Kṣatriya. Thereupon E. says that Kṛṣṇa dealt at length with the subject of Adhyātmam and instilled confidence into Arjuna by the exhibition of his universal form. Terror-stricken, Arjuna then seeks his refuge, whereupon the solemn message is given:

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1. Mal.Bh.p.8.

2. " " p.283.



"Oh Kaurava!      fear not: fight on:  
Do not be despondent, all you see is I.

This is followed by the cryptic lines:

"What Madhava told Arjuna in order to remove  
his delusion is all Upaniṣads and learned  
men have called it the Gīta".

The form in which E. has put it indicates that he sees in the context only a poetic situation in which Arjuna stands in need of divine inspiration to overcome his depression, and that the teachings of the Gita are contained in the Upaniṣads. It is a kind of mystic experience to Arjuna, the effect of which E. seems to visualise from his own emotional consciousness.

The Gīta has been a puzzle to many scholars, and its message has been interpreted in different ways. All schools of Hindu philosophic thought have endeavoured to make it the basis of their doctrines. <sup>1.</sup> Even in modern times its appeal, is diverse. C.A.Vaidya looks upon it as a priceless work on ethics, philosophy and religion combined. <sup>2.</sup> Lāla Lajpat Rai <sup>3.</sup> sees in it the philosophy of action. The astute thinker Tilak <sup>4.</sup> finds the doctrine of Energhism expounded in it. Such diversity of views points to a fundamental lack of coherence in the teachings embodied in it as a result of an attempt to incorporate <sup>said</sup> in it what has been/in different earlier philosophical works. <sup>5.</sup> particularly in Upaniṣads. Modern critical study has

1. Sankara Rāmānuja and Mādḥava, founders of three different churches, have written commentaries on it in support of their doctrines.

2. Epic India, p.468.

3. The Message of the Gita, p.33.

4. Introduction to Hindu scriptures, p. XXIV.

5. In the opinion of some this constitutes the chief merit of the work as it provides a common ground for different creeds of the Hinduism.



arrived at the same conclusion. The opinion of two distinguished scholars on the subject representing the English and the Indian view point deserves our attention in this connection. Says Dr. Barnett in his learned introduction to his translation of the work.<sup>1.</sup>

"If the greatness of a book be measured by its power over the souls of men then assuredly the Gita is a great book. Yet if we apply it the standard of criticism it cannot be ranked with great classics. Its thought is confused, its utterance is loose and rambling. The learning it parades is shallow and ill assorted. At rare intervals indeed it breaks out into utterance of deep poetic intensity and thrilling melody, but they are almost always echoes of voices from the past, and as a rule may be traced back to some Upanisad".

Dr. S. Das Gupta echoes the same view but in a different form "Sometimes in the same passage and sometimes in passages of the same context the Gita takes a pantheistic view, reverting to the same breadth to a transcendental or to a theistic view and thus seeming to imply that no contradiction was felt in the different aspects of God as preserver and controller of the world, as the substance of the world life and soul and as the transcendent substratum underlying them all.<sup>2.</sup>

B. anticipated this view four centuries ago, and the fact that he gave expression to it in plain language in his epic bears ample testimony to his intellectual honesty and

1. p.79.  
2. Indian Idealism, p.59.



bold thinking. The only new thing about <sup>the</sup> Gīta according to him, was the personality of Kṛṣṇa, to which he drew attention. The introduction of the Gīta, which according to him lacked the unity of conception which he was attempting in his work, would therefore, be against his artistic ideal, and it was accordingly eliminated from his work. He however, recorded the event.

Here the critic may raise another issue -

Is it the first time that Arjuna was forced to fight his gurus and became conscious of his sin. A similar situation arose at the end of the Ajñātavāsa when the Kauravas with all the gurus challenged Virāta after stealing his cows and Arjuna had to defend him. He experienced no compunction at that time. On a subsequent occasion during the war Arjuna raised his hand against his elder brother, who slighted his ability to win; whereupon Kṛṣṇa intervened and asked him to desist from 'Guruvadham', which he advocated as a matter of duty in the Gīta. E. points out here that "contrary to his previous teaching, Kṛṣṇa said that the punishment for 'guruvadham' was hell".

#### Eṣuttaccan's Kṛṣṇa.

E's attitude towards the Gīta gives us an insight into his conception of the character of Kṛṣṇa, its traditional author. In it he appears as a philosopher who sets at nought human considerations, and praises Vairāgya, indifference to the flesh, as a sublime virtue. But in the actual story of the

1. Mal: Bh. Karnaparvam p. 343.

2. Mal. Bh. p. 341.



epic he evinces a personal interest in the characters with whom he is associated. Such a role is quite opposed to the one revealed in the Gīta. Elsewhere he exhibits passion and emotion just like other characters, and whole-heartedly identifies himself with his devotees. This aspect of his character according to E. is the most lovable part of Kṛṣṇa's personality, and represents its universality. His description of Kṛṣṇa is accordingly quite different from that of Rāma. The hero of Rāmāyana is admirable and commands adoration. Kṛṣṇa comes nearer to his heart and awakens his love and devotion. In Kṛṣṇa he as a true Bhakta visualises the perfect mingling of the divine and the human personality. Kṛṣṇa's role as Pārthasārathi, which in his view symbolises God's universal sympathy and service to his devotees, draws out all the devotional <sup>~</sup>fe<sup>r</sup>our of which he is capable. It flows into a most charming poetic description, which is at once a masterpiece of lyrical and of mystical expression. It is put in the mouth of Salyar, who acts as charioteer for Karna during his fight. Karna asks for Arjuna. Salyar points out the chariot driven by Kṛṣṇa. The moment the name of Kṛṣṇa is mentioned the intensity of the poet's feelings breaks out into melodious poetry, every line of which thrills the reader with rapturous ecstasy. It brings the whole figure of Kṛṣṇa as a charioteer before his mind's eye. It defies translation; but the following lines are typical. The poet describes Kṛṣṇa from head to foot. This is how he describes the eyes:-



Kindness that extends to us devotees,  
 The anger that turns on wicked men,  
 The tender love that endears to women,  
 The sense of wonder at the sight of the battle,  
 The smile that mocks the unworthy,  
 The terror that frightens enemies,  
 All these shine in the eyes in their mixed beauty.

The picture concludes thus :-  
 .....and the lotus feet  
 as always enthroned in my mind, I saw in  
 that jewel of a chariot".

The personality that is revealed through these inspiring lines possesses a charm and dignity which are absent in the matter-of-fact philosopher who preached the Gita. In Eṣuttaccan's mind Kṛṇa moves with all the sensations and intensity of feeling which a living personality inspires. He never looks upon Kṛṇa as a mere intellectual abstraction. He is a presence to be felt and known. He wants his readers also to love the charming 1. personality of Kṛṇa as he does and as women have already done. The incongruity apparent in the combination of amorous propensity and philosophic serenity that often puzzles critics of Kṛṇa's character has no place in Eṣuttaccan's conception of Kṛṇa. -

#### Other characters.

Eṣuttaccan's imagination has invested the other characters also with a similar individuality of appeal, although it is less intense than that of Kṛṇa. Bhīṣma with his dignified and philosophic bearing, Drōṇa with his relentless 1. Eṣuttaccan never refers to the amorous adventures of Kṛṇa. He thinks that the God is loved by women for His personal charms and the interest He takes in them. In Mahābhārata Kṛṇa saves the honour of Draupadi, which act is by itself enough to win the regard of the fair sex.



skill and acuteness, Karna with his pompous boasting, Dhr̥tarāṣṭra with his crooked vision, Duryōdhana with his self advertising pomp, Duṣṣāsana with his ruthless cruelty, Sakuni with his low cunning, Yudhiṣṭhira with his virtuous calm, Bhīma with his impetuous strength, Arjuna with his artful and engaging disposition, Vidura with his profound wisdom, Vyāsa with his mysterious grandeur, and above all Kṛṣṇa with his transcendental splendour all pass before the reader's mind as beautifully drawn pictures with a definite outline and expression.

### Eṣuttaccan's poetry.

In the consideration of E's poetry the first thing that strikes us is his overmastering personality. In fact, as John Drinkwater suggests, "the personality of the author<sup>1</sup> and the spirit of the age are the most important influences in all poetry". Every line of his is stamped with his genius, and we can distinguish his work in any collection of Malayālam poetry, even though the author's name is purposely concealed. A graceful felicity of diction, the adjustment of the style to the thought and situation, the absence of any straining after effect, an innate beauty born of a natural flow of words and not of any attempt at conscious embellishment, a charming finality of expression, above all a high moral tone and dignity, are the most prominent characteristics of his poetry. There are poets before and after him who equal him in one or  
 1. We have discussed this in chapter II.



two of the above qualities. But there is none who possesses these in such perfect combination that we often are at a loss to say which of the above are the most dominant characteristics. This accounts for the unique position he holds in Malayalam literature. His style has an eternal freshness and vivacity that has been unaffected by the lapse of four centuries. It still stands as a model. It surpasses the style of even the leading poets of modern times in point of modernity and finish. Many of his expressions have become household words among Malayalis, and still remain a potent influence in Malayalam language and literature.

Another remarkable feature is the versatility of his genius. Poetry is often divided into different classes, such as narrative, descriptive, lyrical. It is impossible to say in which of these types he excels. In all he attains the highest level of excellence to which even few great poets can lay claim. The same applies to his skill in dealing with various human moods. Indian aesthetics recognise nine fundamental moods of Rasas, that find expression in fine art. Our poet is equally adept in the delineation of these moods. He seems to have also included Bhakti (devotion) as the tenth, which pervades all his works as a supreme sentiment.

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1. Sṛṅgāra (love) vīra<sup>2</sup> (the heroic) (a) hāsyā (humour) 4 Karuṇā (Pathos) 5 Bhayaṇaka (fear) 6 Raudra (terror) 7 Bībhatsa (disgust) 8 Vyāsana (sorrow) 9 Sānti (contentment).

2. G.A. Grierson prefers to translate this as 'faith' - Gleanings from The Bhakta-māla, p.614 of J.R.A., 5 - July 1909



Behind this poetic personality stands the man in all his imposing but graceful complexity. First and foremost is the poet, possessing a keen insight into human nature and taking a genuine interest in it. There is then the philosopher, looking upon life with a good-humoured sympathy, but occasionally smiling at its foibles; and above all there is the saint, to whom morality is a passion, and devotion to God an overmastering power.

Coming to Bhāratam, in which an epic theme with a number of minor stories has to be handled, narration necessarily has priority. It is a delight to watch the easy flow of E's narration, illumined by an exceedingly fertile imagination. The essentials of the story are presented in their proper perspective, and the characters parade before us full of life and action. In accordance to their poetic value, some stories are short, other more elaborate. The interest is sustained throughout and one always wishes to read them over again to enjoy their beauty and charm. The stories that describe Vyāsa's birth, Yayāti's eventful marriage with Devayāni and his secret affairs with Śarmistha, Śakuntala's heroic defence of her rights, Arjuna's romantic elopment with Subhadra, are examples of vivid narration. For every episode the background is well prepared. An instance may be cited. When Arjuna is admitted to the inner apartments of Kṛṣṇa's palace Subhadra is ordered to look after the pretended Sanyāsin. He falls in love with the charming virgin, who meets him several times a day. In the original they



straightway begin a conversation, in which Subhadra enquires after the welfare of the Pāṇḍavas, and particularly of Arjuna, who is then supposed to be on a pilgrimage. Our poet does not introduce it so abruptly. He makes both observe each other well, impressing on the reader their mutual feelings. Arjuna watches Subhadra play with her friends, and indulge in various amusements. Both feel the inner urge, and Subhadra, enlightened woman as she is, realises the delicacy that Arjuna feels in playing a part not quite suited for romance. She is the first to break the silence. Let the poet describe it :

"One fine day after a meal, in a happy mood and  
full of curious desire, feeling the call of Cupid,  
Standing at the door half open,  
Revealing her eyes and throbbing breast little  
by little 1.  
(Though improper) If I speak to the Yati  
the truth will be known. If not, no harm  
is done by the exchange of courtesy".

Then the conversation proceeds. When her enquiry reaches the third brother of the Pāṇḍavas she adds a qualifying compliment 2. to Arjuna that he is too good a man to suffer like that. Before this scene the poet gives his readers an idea of the Yati's condition:

"The Sanyāsin entered the maiden's chambers,  
became a slave to her charms;  
The brother of Dharmaputra<sup>3</sup> felt the pangs of  
love,  
Lost his sleep and relished not his food,  
And every day there was more concentration  
in his thoughts

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1. Sage.

2. Referring to his pilgrimage.

3. The poets by this expression satirises his conduct.



A few examples of his treatment of the various moods may be quoted. We will begin with love, which is a perennial theme of the poets all over the world, and is considered to be the <sup>1.</sup> 'prince of aesthetic moods. In this respect E. adopts a method of his own. Different aspects of the erotic mood represented by various characters are portrayed. He also makes a distinction between blind passion and genuine love. In the former category, to name a few examples, come the Parāśara episode and Kicaka's tragedy. He relates the affair of Parāśara in a disapproving tone, as according to him the sage betrayed his calling lamentably and did not exhibit as much discretion as the unsophisticated fisherwoman showed. He makes the sage speak the usual language of lust and concludes :-

"Why say more !!

The sage who had seen the secret of worldly  
ties and their redemption (Salvation)

In a sacred hour (morning<sup>2</sup>) and on the  
sacred (waters) and pure Yamuna

When the divine light of sun was dawning embraced  
the daughter of the fisherwoman."

He justifies this on the ground that it led to the birth of a great man, and moralises on the effects of contact with virtuous souls though for improper purposes.

### Heroines.

Among his heroines Dēvayāni is an example of jealous love, and the scenes in which she appears are described

1. Rasacakravarti.

2. When he is expected to say his prayers.



in that vein. Sarmistha is of the opposite type, passionate, submissive and genuine. The tragedy of her relationship with Yayāti is vividly pictured. Yayāti loves Sarmistha, a princess, whose temper brings her trouble and servitude under Dēvayāni, who becomes mistress of the situation and also the legal wife of her lover. Chance one day gave her an opportunity to meet Yayāti, and her passion is thus described :-

"On that day after her ceremonial bath  
 She surveyed her breast despairingly,  
 Adorned her teeth and lips and painted  
 her round breast and forehead with  
 sandal paste,  
 Spread her flowing hair that looked like  
 Cupid's crest  
 Wore a clean cloth, and painted her eyes  
 black,  
 Bedecked her body with gold jewels  
 Looked at the mirror  
 Thinking of her lover, and leaning over  
 an asoka tree".

It is a perfect picture of passionate love.

In the scenes between Subhadra and Arjuna which we have already noticed this voluptuousness is absent. Their union is painted as a model of enlightened love, in which the lover and the loved unite in perfect equality. External charms play a subordinate part, and mental ecstasy reigns supreme in it.

The heroic sentiment is described in all its intensity in the battle scenes that occur in Bhīsmam to Salyam Parvams. These pictures abound in minute details



of the fight, which though promiscuous in nature appear with all the vividness of a photograph. They are full of colour and light, and thrilling with action and movement. Not a single item escapes the sharp vision of Kṛṣṇa, who always turns his chariot to the danger zones. Bhīma's fight with Bhagadatta's elephant is a splendid example. But for Kṛṣṇa's intervention it would have ended in the death of Bhīma.

The duel between Duṣśāsana and Bhīma and the latter's drinking the blood of the fallen foe teem with terror (Raudra), and the description is a masterpiece of the kind. The same applies to the duel between Bhīma and Suyōdhana. As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, through the description of duels the poet caters to the Malayālis' traditional love of war, and keeps alive the popularity of 'Ankom' fights between heroes in Malabar which often loom large in popular ballads. It is preserved in the art of Kathakali, which developed a vast literature in the century after E. A duel is an inevitable item in a Kathakali performance.

Gandhārī's lamentation on the battle-field is a remarkable word-picture of pathos. She with other womenfolk enters the battle-field in order to have a last look at the dead bodies of sons and husbands. Their sight arouses uncontrollable feeling. Our poet makes her look at every corpse and contrast its condition with its living state. Her pathetic address to her

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1. A ceremonial duel to settle personal disputes.



own son Suyōdhana, Karna and Abhimanyu is heart-rendering in the extreme. Abhimanyu is the youngest of all. Though he is not her son, her mother's heart melts at the sight of the boy hero.

Oh look, Kṛṣṇa! there he lies on earth,  
Covered with blood.  
Oh Siva! Siva! the charming boy who shines like  
an emerald.  
The pet child of Arjuna,  
And your own nephew  
Why did you not save at least his life,  
Killing is your pastime.

E's dignity does not prevent him from indulging in humour, but he believes in the maxim that 'brevity is the soul of wit'. The reader perceives sparks of humour which at his touch flash into flames. When Uttara is offered to Arjuna in marriage in return for services rendered, he accepts her for his son, in view of (according to the original Bh.) her age and the ~~possible talk of a~~ possibility of scandal attaching to his character. Our poet does not leave it at that, but adds an interesting remark :-

2.  
"All the things that he taught (her)  
No one knew! People might say thus"

Bhīma's strangling of Kīcaka has called forth a similar observation. Kīcaka unsuspectingly embraced the disguised Bhīma! The latter

4.  
"Bierced his body (Kīcaka's) with his nails,  
thinking that want of love should not be  
suspected"

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1. K.K.T's translation. Vol. 1. p. 66.

2. Arjuna was dancing master to womenfolk at Virāṭa's Court. Mal. Bh. p. 250.

3. Kīcaka's advances were resented by Draupadi, who was saved by Bhīma going in the guise of a woman to meet Kīcaka.

4. The word used is 'Nakhakṣatam' a technical word which Vātsyāyana uses in his Kāmasūtra (science of erotics).



such instances are scattered all over the pages of E's Bhāratam, which is a storehouse of poetic gems.

To sum up, Bhāratam is the crowning gem of E's poetic achievement. The diversity of interest afforded by the theme gave his genius plenty of scope, and the result was an abundant display of it. Though he has omitted a number of stories and didactic additions, all that is worth having in the original epic as a piece of a genuine literature is contained in his magnificent production. It is my conviction that from the point of view of pure aesthetic enjoyment E's achievement is a distinct gain in the field of Bhārata literature. His imagination and poetic sensibility have made notable original contributions to the sum total of literary output achieved through the medium of the Bhārata lays that have been growing for centuries on Indian soil. It is a masterpiece of vigorous narration, subtle characterisation and sublime poetry.

E's Bhāratam, though much smaller in size has nothing in common with the colourless summary of Kṣēmendra. The original epic and E's epic stand in the same relation as the works of two different artists who have used the same brush and paint for their make-up. While Kṣēmendra's work is like a toy model of the original with none of its beauties E's Bhāratam is another first-rate artistic production of the same type as the Sanskrit epic, differing in design and finish. The enlightened public of Kēraḷa ~~as the epic of Malayalam~~, therefore



with sufficient justification still cherish it as the epic of Malayalam although in recent times they have been so fortunate to secure a good literal translation of the Sanskrit  
 1. 2.  
 epic and Ksemendra's summary. This is no reflection on the work of these translators; on the contrary, it proclaims the unquestionable merits of E's masterpiece.

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1. By Kuññukuttan Tampurān, reference to which has already been made in the course of this chapter.

2. By Katattanād Udayavarma Rāja and others.



Minor works: contemporaries:

Chapter V.



## Chapter V

### Introductory.

In respect of the A.R. and the M.Bh. discussed at length in the preceding chapters there has been no dispute about their authorship. Tradition, critical study and manuscript evidence are unanimous in assigning them to Eṣuttaccan. On the question of his minor works such unanimity of opinion does not exist. The practice of submitting one's ventures in the literary field to a guru for approval or correction and the instinct of imitation, a common weakness of humanity, have been mainly responsible for the difficulties created in this respect. If by some chance the guru could not examine a work of his disciple, its author would prefer to remain anonymous, and in course of time the works of both the teacher and pupil were mixed up. If the guru happened to be the founder of an institution, the confusion increased in proportion to the number of members it had. In the case of Eṣuttaccan we have already seen that he was a pioneer in more fields than one, and he had a regular stream of followers and disciples. Besides, the practice of reading one's poem to interested listeners kept the author's name in the background, and his modesty, which had no publicity organisation to shake it, took care to conceal it. If this confusion was not enough, imitators completed it.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇam, undoubtedly occupies the first rank among E's minor works. Curiously enough, scholars who have wasted their energies in studying uncertain works have not paid much attention to it. It is not included in the list of the eleven works



1. enumerated in the History of Malayālam literature. More than half the number mentioned therein have been proved to be not his.

2. Other scholars make only passing reference to this poem, but have not commented on its merit.

It is based on the Sanskrit Purāṇa of the same title. As usual, it is only the narrative material that is taken from the original. The version is original. The work was undertaken at the instance of Nētranārāyaṇan<sup>3.</sup> and the author is referred to as a Rāma Śiṣya (disciple of Rāma)<sup>4.</sup> at the end. This Rāma is the same person (brother) mentioned by Eṣuttaccan in the A.R. The poet attempts only to render the middle portion of the voluminous purāṇa, and treats the stories of Jamadagni, Kārtavīryārjuna and Sagara at considerable length. The fight between Parasurāma and Kārtavīryārjuna reminds us of the descriptions of battle scenes in the poet's M.Bh. in their thrilling vividness. This story has an historical interest. It is often taken as signifying the struggle between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism or between Kṣatriyas and Brāhmins for supremacy in ancient Hindu Society. K.Arjuna is a devotee of Viṣṇu. P.Rāma is a disciple of Śiva. His faith is doubtful, as he appears later as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Śiva saves him in two critical situations in his prolonged fight with K.Arjuna, from whose Vaiṣṇavie disc he escapes

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1. The History of Malayālam literature by P.Govinda Pillay, p.187.

2. (a) K.B.S.C.Vol.11, p.344.

(b) T.R. p.5.

3. The family name of Āṣuvāncēri Tamprākkaḷ, the Nambūdiri high priest of Malabar.

4. ....!Rāmaśiṣyaṇaḷ idam.'



death by bowing to it. This attitude of the enemy induces K.Arjuna to regard him as a friend and stop fighting, and during the trance into which he falls on contemplating his deity he meets death at the hands of his foe. E's description makes it clear that the victory of P.Rāma is not due to his superior skill but a matter of chance or divine will.

The poem is in the heroic mould, and the vigour of our poet's narration and diction is manifest throughout.

The story describing the digging of the earth by Sagara's sons in search of their sacrificial horse, the resultant encroachment by the sea which submerged the sanctuary of Gōkarnam<sup>1</sup> and P.Rāma's reclamation of it later is of peculiar interest to the people of Kēraḷa as it looks like another form of the local myth in which Kēraḷa appears in place of Gōkarnam. It is however noteworthy that E. does not connect two legends.

Uttararāmāyanam is next in point of merit. Rāvana's ancestry forms the theme of the earlier portion of the poem, and the latter part deals with the abandonment of Sita. This poem has provoked the greatest controversy among scholars. In it the poet follows Kannassan's 'Uttaram' which is based on that of Vālmīki, and not the 'Uttaram' of A.R. R.N.Panikkar on that ground argues that it is not E's work.<sup>2</sup> As P.K.suggests,<sup>3</sup> this is no argument against its authorship, as we have already seen from our study of A.R. and M.Bh

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1. In South Kanara.

2. E.B.S. Caritram, p.436.

3. P.E.p.47.



that E. has drawn from Vālmīki and others, and that is no disqualification to any poet. But what about the original contributions and passages in U.R. which are not traceable to the works of any previous writers ? The following is one among many such instances. It describes the reactions of nature to the abandonment of Sītā in the forest.

"Seeing the sorrows of the lotus-eyed(Sītā),  
Trees and Creepers alas! are mourning in sympathy.  
Pity stops the river's flow!  
The sun stands perplexed!  
Wind ceases blowing, and snakes(windeaters) hide in  
holes. 1.  
Birds keep silence on trees!"

A careful student can easily detect the touch of E's master-hand in such passages.

#### Dēvi Mahātmyam.

This is a small poem dealing with the Mother's encounter with various asuras like Madhu and Sumbha and their death at her hands. It forms an important part of the literature of the Sakti cult. The mention of Rāmācāryan removes all doubts about the authorship, although it has to be classed as among the poet's early productions in point of quality. The narration is good, but other qualities are yet to grow. Perhaps the poet was only beginning to feel the call of the muse and was yet unable to make up his mind about his loyalties. The inherited impulse of a Bāyar for the traditional worship of the Mother is claiming his genius, and he is responding to the first call.



Ēzuttaccan's name is intimately connected, as I have pointed out in Chapter II, with the worship of Sakti, which was and is a popular cult among the Nāyars of Malabar, and is closely linked with their martial traditions. As a member of that community it is possible that E. wanted to do something for the cult, and probably this poem was the outcome. He seems to have created an esoteric group among the followers of the Mother, and is believed to have written an authoritative work for their use. The poem under discussion is said to have been composed for beginners. The popular church devoted to the Mother worship or Kālī worship derives its inspiration from the Dāraka legend.<sup>1.</sup> In Dēvi Māhātmyam Dārakan does not appear. Probably the distinction is purposely made to separate the esoteric from the popular mode of worship.

### Harināma Kīrtanam.

Some comments have already been made in Chapter II on this work when discussing the date of Ēzuttaccan. This is the only one among his works in which the name of a Nīlakanthan appears as that of his guru. The fact that in all others the reference is to Rāman is sufficient to justify us in doubting E's authorship. In respect of M.Bh. and U.R. which contain no mention of Rāman, the evidence of Mes. fills the gap and supplies the necessary confirmation. No such authentic evidence is forthcoming to establish beyond doubt the authorship of

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1. It is peculiar to Malabar. The story presents Kālī as the daughter of Śiva and not as his consort, in which role she appears in legends current in other parts of India.



Harināmakīrtanam. The internal evidence of the work also encourages the suspicion. E's. absolute devotion to Kṛṣṇa, which assumes an emphatic form in the M.Bh, is absent in this. Nor does Rāma come in for special consideration. As the name indicates, it is a stotra on Viṣṇu. Reference to Vṛndāvana and amours of Kṛṣṇa (V.29), which E. has studiously avoided in his notable work is another reason to doubt the authorship. Above all there is a request to the guru to correct the composition, which indicates the author's lack of confidence in himself. Eṣuttaccan has never displayed any such tendency. The difference in style is considerable. But that consideration may be waived if there is other overwhelming evidence.

I must not be understood to be under rating the merits of this marvellous production. Its author no doubt belongs to the school of thought which our poet represents. He is an Advaitist and a Yōgi. The central ideas of these two doctrines have been condensed in two slokas (V.2,4) which in their profundity and clarity have something of Eṣuttaccan's tone. The author's power of expressing high philosophical truths in pure Malayalam words is remarkable. It is a gem in Malayāḷam literature and has undoubtedly emanated from a brilliant member of the fraternity whose modesty or other-worldliness cares for neither name or fame.

Cintāratnam is in the doubtful list. It betrays bitter hatred of Brāhmins, which is against the very creed of our poet. It is at the same time a notable work, containing much worldly wisdom, and



is addressed to the author's daughter.

I have already stated my view about Bhāgavatam.

Kēralanāṭakam mentioned by the author of Kēralōlpatti has not been discovered so far. A Malayālam translation of Vāgbhata's Aṣṭāṅgahrdayam generally assigned to E. is used by the native physicians of Malabar. Scholars have had no access to it so far, and it is not possible to say what its character is. Besides these, there are innumerable Aṣṭakams<sup>1</sup> in praise of various deities in Sanskrit and Malayālam that are used for prayers by boys and adults in schools. Their devotional tone and poetic beauty bear the stamp of E's. personality and serve to remind us of his role as an Ācārya.

#### Contemporaries.

The poet speaks only of two men as his contemporaries. One is his elder brother Rāman and the other is Nētranārāyaṇan. Unfortunately enquiries made by scholars have not elicited any new information about these two persons and their associations with the poet. There is no doubt that he held them in high esteem. His brother Rāman is referred to as a great scholar, and Nētranārāyaṇan is spoken of as a Brāhman Saint. The latter, as the name indicates, belongs to the well-known Āṣṭvāncēri mana, the house of the great Nambūdiri priest. This house is only a few miles from the poet's birth place, and it is quite probable that the two were drawn to each other by their temperament and out look. There is also the possibility that this

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1. A poem in stōtra style with eight stanzas.



1.

great saint induced E. to compose the A.R. The name Dēvanārayanaṇ, which appears in the legend about the A.R., may be a mistake for Nētranārayanaṇ, as such errors often occur in the oral transmission of anecdotes from age to age. The identity of this Brāhman Saint with the author of Tantrasaṃgraham, whose name is Nīlakanṭha, is suggested by the fact that the latter also belongs to Āṣṭvāncēri. Besides their family names, members of titular families in Malabar have personal names too. The family name is often used by the senior member in official correspondence on behalf of the house. Since Nīlakanṭha's date coincides with that of Kṛuttacēan, the assumption that both the names Nīlakanṭhan and Nētranārayanaṇ apply to the same individual is not improbable. E's proficiency in Tantric ritual is perhaps due to his association with this famous 'Tāntrikan'. But it does not follow that the other Nīlakanṭhan mentioned in Harināmakīrtanam and the author of Tantrasaṃgraham are identical persons.

Another name that deserves mention in this connection is that of Meppattur. Here again tradition is our main authority. Their dates comes very near each other, and they are separated by one generation. As Meppattur is supposed to have lived more than a hundred years, there is a probability of his meeting E. in his old age and seeking his advice about the composition of his work Nārāyaṇīyam.

5.

There is one thing common between them, and

1. The family name of the Rāja of Ambalapuzā.

2. The family name of the Āṣṭvāncēri priest.

3. 1501 A.D.

4. Chapter II. vide p.

5. There is an anecdote about a discussion between them on the relative importance of sound and meaning in literature.



that is proved beyond doubt by their works. Both are advocates of Bhakti and devotees of Kṛṣṇa. In the case of Meppattur personal sufferings intensified his devotional fervour, while with E. it was the outcome of personal faith, that stood in need of no such inducement. This similarity of outlook and faith suggested by the general tenour of their major works and confirmed by tradition indicates the influence of E. On the learned men of his age, with whom Bhakti was a governing principle.

The name of another Hambūdiri poet and devotee of Kṛṣṇa is linked up with that of Meppattur. He is Pūntānam, of whom mention has already been made in Chapter II. He also advocates Bhakti in his famous philosophical poem Jñānapāna. He was not a Sanskrit scholar, and he is reported to have asked his brother poet to go through his work and make corrections in it. The latter declined, as it was in Malayālam. This attitude of the scholar poet seems to have displeased their common idol Kṛṣṇa and brought back his old complaint accompanied by a dream in which Kṛṣṇa appeared and chastised the poet for his indifference towards his other devotee. I have already referred to Meppattur Bhaṭṭatīrī's guru Achyuta Piṣārōṭi, the astrologer, who also is from Trikkantiyūr. There is no story connecting these two with E. This group of men who seem to have lived not far removed from E. appears as inheriting the tradition left by the poet Saint.

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1. He was a confirmed paralytic. The story is that by the time he finished his prayers through his work he was miraculously restored to health.



Ezuttacean as an Epic poet, philosopher and  
reformer.

Chapter VI.



E. as an epic poet.

Epic poetry is often distinguished by the universality of its appeal and the sublimity of its thought and diction. The former is due to the diverse interests and the mass human experience which it represents. The latter is the result of the high level at which the characters are set. In the western world of letters Homer, though he possesses both, is noted for the first quality, Dante and Milton for the second. In India epic poets have generally combined the two. In point of diction Vālmīki is considered superior to Vyāsa, who however excels the former in universality of appeal. In Tamil and Malayalam Kamban and Eṣuttaccan respectively have attained a similar distinction. Though the persons in the epics which E. has rendered into Malayalam are not his creations, as for that, the characters in most epics are mostly legendary heroes - he has given them a new individuality and life which make them appear almost as if created by him. They are presented with epic dignity and grandeur in the sublime style of his diction and thought, which E. maintains throughout his major works. Their appeal has been therefore universal and varied. The people of Malabar look upon them as their own heroes, and they are often quoted in their daily life in the setting in which they are placed by E. I have already referred to the practice of daily recitation of his epics which has given them a status which the works of no poet in Malayalam have enjoyed before and after him. There is another



quality of his poetry which has added to its popularity. The charge of indecency has been laid at the door of the epic poets of India, among whom sensuousness and saintliness are very often inseparable. It must be said to the credit of our poet that he has never exposed himself to such an accusation. His works can be read in a mixed assembly of men and women without arousing in any of them any sense of shame. His descriptions of heroines, even the most sensuous of them, never degenerate into an analysis of their features, in which Sanskrit poets often indulge. The reader's attention is focussed upon their general beauty and not upon their various limbs. They are not types either. Everyone of them is different from the other, and has an individual charm. His presentation of them never wounds the moral susceptibilities of readers. This unique quality has made his epics eminently fitted for daily recitation with reverence in every Malayāli home, and they have raised the tone of its character and the sense of aesthetic appreciation of the people. Their human touch endears itself to all, however different their temperaments and interests.

#### E. and his predecessors.

In diction and narrative ease Kannassan comes almost near him, but he lacks E's. vigour, vision, and variety. Both have handled identical themes, and certain ideas are common to them; but even in such cases, when they pass through E's. artistic mould they are thoroughly transformed and breathe a new vitality and force. An instance may be cited.



When Rama breaks the bow at Janaka's palace, Kannassan compares the sound to thunder: the kings are frightened at it like snakes and Sita is pleased like a peacock. The expressions like 'Iti' and 'Vettuka'<sup>1</sup> which E. uses to convey the same idea impressed the reader with the actual sound of the breaking of the bow. He also brings in a hen peacock to suit the analogy to the heroine. The characters of both have life, while Kannassan's figures move only through the agency of himself. E's do so of their own accord. In imagery Cerusseri is more fertile, but he betrays symptoms of conscious effort. Ezuttaccan's pictures proclaim the dictum that "art lies in concealing art". Cerusseri relies on adornment for effect, while Ezuttaccan achieves it through the natural power of words and their associations. One displays his art through a situation, and the other presents a situation through his art. Both Kannassan and Cerusseri lack Ezuttaccan's versatility and finish.<sup>2</sup> Nor have they shown any skill in the art of dialogue, in which effective speeches heighten the dramatic effect of situations in E's poems. Krishna's speech at the Court of the Kauravas arguing the case of the Pandavas and Sakuntala's defence of her rights are remarkable examples of this aspect of Ezuttaccan's poetry.

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1. Iti Vettitum vannam.....Mal.A.R.p.

2. In the light of these remarks there is no need to comment on the view expressed by Dr. Burnell that E. was a mere translator



### E's Philosophy and Religion.

Except for his preference for the doctrine of Bhakti, E. does not seem inclined to preach exclusively the concepts of any school of Hindu philosophic thought. As an enlightened Hindu who <sup>has</sup> learned the fundamentals of every school and <sup>has</sup> known first hand the currents and cross-currents of the different religious divisions that are known by the misleading name Hinduism, "which is neither a single tree nor a forest <sup>1.</sup> of trees", he expounds each as occasion offers. In his A.R. the adwaita philosophy, with its conceptions of Jīvātma and Paramātma and Māya, is explained at length as found in the original, with his own personal touches here and there. In M.Bh., as I have already shown, Destiny and Karma are emphasised. Behind all these runs the under-current of Bhakti; emanating from his Vaisṇava faith and emphasising devotion to a supreme deity, who according to his conviction is Kṛṣṇa. He is a true Bhakta, possessing all the qualifications enumerated in Bhaktamāla. "Trust is the scented oil and hearing of the story of the Lord is the cosmetics. Dwelling on him in the heart is the clear water in which she (Bhakti) batheth and which removeth from every limb the foulness <sup>2.</sup> of spiritual pride." The doctrine is preached <sup>3.</sup> to Sabari, in the A.R. and by the poet himself in M.BH., when Kṛṣṇa's disc performs <sup>4.</sup>

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1. Hinduism by Dr.L.D.Barnett,p.1

2. Gleanings from Bhakta māla by Sir G.A.Grierson,C.I.E.(J.R.A.S. July,1909, p.610).

3.(Orig) A.R.,p. 85,86

4. Mal.M.Bh.p,232.



a miracle. The reflections in which he indulges on the latter occasion seem to sum up his religion and philosophy.

1.

"The son of Indra fulfilled his vow,  
And Mādhava withdrew the disc;  
and the Sun shone bright.  
If Īswara, who is truth incarnate is  
pleased, even the lowest of men will realise  
their ambition.  
There is no use having money or influence;  
For divine pleasure one needs have only Bhakti.  
A Bhakta, though powerless, poor and low-born,  
Will be deemed most virtuous among men. 2.  
And he will be blessed with enjoyment and salvation  
If you have your mind pure,  
Worship the beautiful-eyed God"(Kṛṣṇa).

The stress he lays on mental purity in this is typical of his general attitude towards life. As a true Hindu religion was never for him an abstract idea or a philosophical concept, nor is his philosophy like that of the Vedāntin divorced from life. It is an experience to which the tenets of the various creeds are only aids 3.  
It consisted in the "consciousness of the ultimate reality and not in any theory". That consciousness gives the supreme happiness, and 4.  
can be attained only through Bhakti; of which purity of mind and body is an essential part.

The general tone of his works and the tradition emphatically affirm that he was never content with preaching purity

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1. To kill Jayadratha, who played foul against Abhimanyu and killed the boy hero.

2. The poet here used the words 'Bhukti' and 'Mukti'.

3. All doctrines are fundamentally one.  
Nānāsiddhāntamellāṃkāṇāṁ tathakāṇaṁ, Santi p.407.

4. S.Radhakrishnan, Legacy of India, p.261.



He practised it to perfection. He gives us an insight into the mysteries of Yoga when he describes the deaths of Bhīṣma<sup>x.</sup>, Kṛṣṇa<sup>1.</sup> and Kārtavīryarjuna<sup>2.</sup>. They assume a Yōgic pose, receiving death rather than succumbing to it. These descriptions have the ring of personal experience. But E. never expounds Yōga as a working principle for all, but presents it as an ideal condition within the reach of only those who are fit for it mentally and physically.

The hypothetical name 'Rāmānujan'<sup>3.</sup> has led many people to believe that E. was a follower of Rāmānuja, the founder of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of philosophy. Nowhere in his works do we find a reference to this school or its philosophy. On the contrary, Advaita is often mentioned in them. It is an unusual position, as generally Bhaktas are Viśiṣṭādvaitins. He calls Bhārat<sup>4.</sup> a story of Advaita (Advaitōpākhyānam). The two schools differ on one main issue. The Advaitist characterises salvation as "the identification of the supreme soul with the individual soul, the two being one in essence"<sup>5.</sup>. The other recognises the two as distinct

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x. Mal.M.Bh.p,409.

1. Mal.M.Bh.p,426.

2. Brh.Pur.p,119.

3. I have already referred to this topic when discussing the poet's name in Ch.II.

4. Mal.M.Bh.p,57.

5. Hindu Gods and Heroes, p,106.



entities, and aims at the union rather than the fusion of the two. E. has never shown any inclination to the latter view. Nor does he recognise the doctrine of Varnāśrama Dharma, which Rāmānuja emphasises on the authority of the Gīta. He seems to have combined adwaita with the Bhakti aspect of Viśiṣṭādvaita, perhaps under the influence of the wave of the Bhakti movement which swept over the whole of India during that century.

### As social and educational reformer.

In the social sphere our poet has left the memory of a life devoted to service and sacrifice. Education of the masses was his ideal. He proclaims his faith in the awakening of the masses at the commencement of the A.R. by announcing that he is composing the work for the 'un-enlightened'<sup>1.</sup>, and he asks the enlightened to forgive his intrusion in a field which according to them he is not entitled to enter. Through this cryptic reference flashes a light that bares open the social conditions which he tries to improve.

In ancient Kēraḷa instruction in warfare and letters was given in Kaḷaris.<sup>2.</sup> The teachers in them were generally Nāyars. The system worked very well so long as that community controlled the state and its various activities. With the rise of the priestly class, favoured by the conditions outlined in Chapter II, Sanskrit culture encroached on indigenous culture,<sup>and</sup> mass education suffered a set back. No teacher without

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1. Bōdha hīnanmārKariyām Vannam collī tūnnēn.

2. Later on they became mere gymnasium or centres of military training.



a knowledge of Sanskrit was considered worthy of his calling, nor was his position as a scholar recognised. Facilities for learning that language were not within the reach of the average man, as Brahman teachers of Sanskrit were available only to the gentry and others who had access to them socially. The political vicissitudes of the country compelled Nāyars to concentrate their attention on military training at the expense of their mental equipment, and a general intellectual barrenness threatened to overtake the people at large. It was from this cultural calamity that E. saved his countrymen, particularly the major portion of the Nāyars and the masses. Being a Yōgi himself, his needs were few, and he was prepared to impart knowledge to his fellowmen free. His personality attracted people from far and near; and soon his residence, which had already been made a temple of learning by his elder brother, was converted into a hermitage. His mission was, as in the literary field, to develop the pioneer work done by his brother to perfection with the force of his personality and genius. Even in these modern days, when schools have replaced the traditional institutions of public instruction, the "Eṣuttaccan method"<sup>1.</sup> which stands for all-round thoroughness, has not lost its reputation.

From our survey of the epics we have seen that E. was not for eliminating military training from his scheme of education. He never wanted Nāyars to lose their martial valour.

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1. 'Eṣuttaccan Maṭṭu' - This applies also to the way in which his epics are recited.



By his descriptions of fights he kept their traditional interest in warfare alive. But he always warned them to be fair in their fighting and thereby raised its moral tone. Foul play in battle aroused his indignation. When Bhīma dealt a blow on the thigh of Duryodhana E. unconsciously cries "Ayyō! Kaṣṭaṇ" (alas! what a pity!) Everything else in Bhīma he was ready to forgive, but not this treachery. He always presented fairness as an ideal for a soldier. He had the greatest admiration for the heroes who died fighting for the principles they held dear. His descriptions often presented the vanquished in a better light than the victors. He always gave them an opportunity to state their case in heroic form before they began the actual combat. At the same time, he had the vision of a prophet to realise that the impact of events was too strong for the political power of his countrymen to survive, as it was decaying. So he concentrated on their cultural uplift.

The political integrity of Malabar received its first shock from the Portuguese when it was beginning to crumble. It steadily declined in the period that followed, till the final blow came from Mysore in the 18th century. Travancore, as it was far from the tribulations that affected the Northern part of Kerala, managed to preserve it longer owing to the genius of the Great ruler Mārtaṇḍavarma and Rāja Kēśavadāsa. Its meteoric outburst in the North of Kēraḷa through its worthy champion Kōṭṭayatt Rāja in the beginning of the 19th century showed its inherent vitality. By this time however it was shattered to pieces, and the chance of its rehabilitation vanished forever.



In the confusion that was inevitable in such a crisis its culture also would have perished, had it not been for the genius of Eṣuttaccan, who by his noble and enduring efforts in the literary, social and cultural spheres restored it on a firmer basis. It has endured ever since.

His is no doubt a remarkable achievement in everyway. His function throughout had been to blend the best elements in the old and the new. In Literature he combined the indigenous culture with the Sanskritic traditions, giving the former a stronger tone and a more enduring basis. He was considerably helped in this by the achievement of Kannassan and Cerusseri in the literary field. To their delicate notes he added his vigorous clarion call. The status of Malayālam was no longer in doubt, but was established once for all. In the educational field he practised the principles he preached in his works, and revived a rapidly declining system, infusing fresh vigour and life into it by which it could adapt itself to the new needs and requirements. By training a vast body of young men imbued with his ideal of conduct saintly devotion, self-sacrifice and a genuine interest in their fellow countrymen he instilled into the ancient culture of the land a refreshing vitality and force that raised his people from their gloom and placed them on a higher plane of existence. "The poet was really a prophet in the land".

This cultural regeneration had its effects. When the political horizon was cleared of clouds and things



settled down, the results of E's solid work came to the surface. The community that had the privilege of his guidance came to the forefront in the new order; and enjoyed the prestige that had been theirs centuries ago. Behind this remarkable phenomenon stands in all its glory the inspiring personality of Tuñjattezuttaccan the poet, the philosopher and the saint.

Distinction in one field is rare enough. Distinction in diverse fields is rarer still. Is it a wonder therefore that the people of Malabar deified their saviour ?

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## APPENDIX I.

### Līlātilakam.

#### General.

This is a treatise on Malayālam grammar and rhetoric written in Sanskrit, with examples etc. in Malayālam. The author is unknown. It is assigned to the 15th Cent. A.D. (Introduction to the work by A.K. Piṣārōṭi p.xxviii). It consists of eight chapters called "Silpam". The first three deal with the language and the rest discuss literary principles.

#### Ch.I.

Deals with 'Maṇipravālam'.

The introductory portion discusses the nature of the Malayālam language in general and its affinities with the Dravidian family of languages. The author refers to Tamil as Cōla Bhāṣa, and expresses the astounding view that the Kanarese people and the Teluḡs are not Dravidians, as their alphabet is different. Then 'Maṇipravālam' is defined as Bhāṣa saṁskṛtayaōgam, and four varieties of it are considered.

(a) Uttamaṁ (good). In this Malayālam should be given prominence and Sanskrit a subordinate place. The dominant sentiment (Rasa) should be emphasised. This is ag



sub-divided into three.

- (b) Madhyamam (middle), in which equal importance is attached to the languages combined and the meaning and the sentiment.
- (c) Madhyamakalpam (indifferent) (4 varieties), in which either the languages are disproportionately mixed or the sentiment is defective.
- (d) Adhamam (bad), in which both the languages, i.e. the mixture, and the sentiment are equally deficient.

Ch.II.

Analyses the composition of the words in the Malayālam language and classifies them as (1) desi (indigenous), (2) saṃskṛtabhava words borrowed from Sanskrit but having Malayālam formation, i.e. Tadbhava compounds. (3) Saṃskṛtarūpa, Sanskrit words used in their original form, i.e. Tatsama compounds.

Ch.III.

deals with the rules of Sandhi.

Ch.IV.

is concerned with Kāvya dōṣas. Defects in literary compositions.

Ch.V.

considers the Gunas or beauties of literary compositions.

Ch.VI.

discusses śabdāṅkāra or ornaments of style based on sound.



Ch.VII. discusses Arthāṅkara or ornaments of style based on meaning.

Ch.VIII. discusses the 'nine sentiments' in literature.

### Appendix II.

#### Tamilakam.

It is not quite clear from ancient Tamil classics what this term exactly signifies, whether it was applied to areas where Tamil was spoken or whether it meant territories under Tamil sway. An examination of different accounts point to the latter. There is no definiteness either about its extent.

#### 1.

According to Kanakasabhai Tamilakam consisted of thirteen Nāḍus, including Vēṇ and Pūṇi nāḍus that lay at the northern and southern extremities of what is known as Kēraḷa or Malabar. In the opinion of one commentator of Tōlkkaiyāṁ<sup>pp</sup> they must be replaced by Oḷināḍu and Ponkar nāḍu, which were definitely outside Malabar.

#### 2.

M.S.Purnalingam Pillai gives us a different picture. He says, "Tamil land was bifurcated into Sen (classical) Tamil and Koḍum (vulgar) Tamil land", and Malayāḷam is referred to as a language spoken in one of the nāḍus under the second category. Kollam (Quilon, a seaport

#### 3.

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1. The Tamils eighteen hundred years ago, p.12.(1904).

2. Ibid.

3. Tamil India, p.5,6.



on the Malabar coast) is mentioned as one of the adjacent districts bordering on Tamilakam. In 'Manimēkhalai' "Muciri" (Cranganore) appears as a country different from <sup>1.</sup> that with which its author was familiar. Ptolemy speaks of "Limurike" (Tamilakam) and Kērobothros (Kēraḷaputran) separately.

These different accounts indicate that the Tamil country and Malayālam country were considered different in those days and that the extent of the Cera empire was not the same throughout. In the light of these facts the conclusion that "Malayālam had not grown into a separate dialect at this period and that only one language, Tamil, was spoken from the Eastern to the Western Sea" does not appear to be well founded. The matter however, needs further investigation.

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1. The Tamils eighteen hundred years ago p.16.



### Appendix III.

The distinctive features of the Malayalam language which are not noticeable in Tamil.

1. Excessive nasalisation

(Anunāsikātiprasaram).

This refers to the tendency in Malayalam to nasalise by assimilation a hard consonant that follows a nasal.

|                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Tamil               | Mal:           |
| e.g. <u>Tintān.</u> | <u>Tinnān.</u> |

2. Palatal Hiatus (Tālavyādēśam) This is

a change of Dental to palatal nasal when preceded by a high vowel, attended by dropping of the latter.

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| Tamil          | Mal:    |
| e.g. Alaintān. | Alānnān |

3. Contraction of vowels. (Swarasamvaranam)

This relates to the principle of contracting vowels and includes change of final ai to a. In Tamil this signifies only a peculiarity in pronunciation. In Malayalam it serves a definite grammatical function and affects the meaning in the case of verbs.

|            |       |
|------------|-------|
| e.g. Tamil | Mal:  |
| Kan̄tu     | Kante |
| Malai      | Mala  |

4. Omission of personal endings

(Puruṣabhēdanirāsam).

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| Tamil       | Malayalam |
| Avan Vantān | Avan Vann |



5. Retention of archaic forms ) Tamil Mal:  
 (Khilōpasamgraham). ) e.g. Kulikka Kulikkān  
 ) vandēn. vannu.

(Note: Tamil has dropped the old  
 infinitive suffix which  
 Malayālam has retained).

6. Mutation or syncopation of sounds ) Tamil Mal:  
 (Angabhangam). ) e.g. Atinutaiya. Atinte.  
 )

(Kerala Paniniyam by A.R.Raja Raja Varma, p.22, 49).

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## Appendix IV.

### Matriarchy in Malabar.

Matriarchy in Malabar is called Marumakkattāyam. It is a compound word composed of two parts - Marumakan - nephew, and Tayam - system of inheritance. According to this system a man's nephew is his legal heir and not his son. It is prevalent universally among Nāyars and a section of Nambūdiris, Tiyyas and Moplahs of N. Malabar. As in the Matriarchal society, the uncle or Kārṇavan is the important member of the joint family, and is responsible for the maintenance and welfare of the other members. This does not mean that the father has no responsibility whatever for children. There are certain ceremonies like rice-giving, marriage, and death - pollution which the father should attend and during which he should distribute presents and share general expenses. Though women generally live in their own families, Taravād, as it is called, it is open to them to live with their husbands by mutual agreement. In such cases, the husbands usually build a separate house for them.

#### Marriage.

Marriages are arranged by mutual consent, but can be dissolved at the will of either party, if the union does not turn out to be happy. There is no restriction about re-marriage, and there is no widowhood. It is left to individual discretion or taste. But generally those who have children prefer not to marry again unless forced by pecuniary considerations. There is also the custom in some places by which the relations of the



deceased husband look after the needs of the wife and children if she remains unmarried.

The freedom of divorce enjoyed by the women of the Marumakkattayam family is very often misunderstood by many writers as a sign of looseness in the marriage tie. But they fail to realise the fact that this freedom is very rarely abused and is conducive to harmonious domestic relationship. As F. Fawcett has rightly observed "Nowhere else <sup>1.</sup> is the marriage tie more jealously guarded and its breaches more savagely avenged".

It is generally believed that the Nāyars of Malabar practise polyandry. Although there have been isolated instances it has never been a universal custom among them as it is among the artisan classes of Malabar and a section of Tiyyas. Both the latter by the way, are patriarchal. This aspect has been clearly brought out by O. Candu Menon in his able dissenting minute to the Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission (1894).

### Inheritance.

It may be observed that the system does not prevent the father from making any provision for his wife and during his lifetime, if he so desires; and in actual practice such cases are quite common. The position of the women is thus doubly advantageous, and they are economically independent.

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1. Nāyars of Malabar. Madras Government Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 228.



They are entitled to <sup>a</sup>share in the property of the joint family by right, and they acquire property from their husbands by convention. This convention has recently been legalised by an act of the Madras Government and by legislative enactments in Cochin and Travancore. The present position is that wife and children are entitled to a share in the self-acquired property of the father along with his mother.....